



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Cloudy but dry

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The Tabloid
Woody and women: do they mix?

The Tabloid

Network: CD-Roms for Christmas



Comment

Polly Toynbee: advice for agony aunts



Silent fight: John Major gestures during the BBC interview in which he warned his backbenchers against 'trying a bit of pork-barrel politics or a bit of arm-twisting of the Government because it has a small majority' Photograph: Tony Harris/PA

Read my lips: I won't give way

Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

John Major yesterday warned the growing band of party rebels and dissidents that they could be handing the next election to Tony Blair. There were few signs last night that his ultimatum - backed by the threat of an early election - would work. The Prime Minister prompted further angry attacks from the Tory ranks when he used a 50-minute BBC television *On the Record* interview to reaffirm the Cabinet's "wait and see" policy on the European single currency. "My position hasn't changed on these issues, and it is not going to change in the last few months before a general election."

Later, turning from the "trivial, absurd arguments, overblown and distorted as they have been" about his position on the single currency, he addressed the "Westminster froth" of Tory MPs threatening to withdraw support for the Government. "Any one single backbencher can have his moment of fame if he decides that he is going to be difficult on any particular issue of policy," Mr Major said. "Well, the Government can't be held to ransom like this. We're going to continue with our policies and

everybody will have to make their judgement whether they're going to support us or not. If they don't support us, then we may have a general election."

Clearly exasperated, he added: "Are you seriously saying to me that on the basis that someone is trying a bit of pork-barrel politics or a bit of arm-twisting of the Government because it has a small majority... Taking a similarly unequivocal line on the single currency, Mr Major said: "It is in the national

interest for Britain to be in there, negotiating."

As for the Eurosceptic suggestion that a "fudge" on the terms of single currency membership could provide the perfect pretext for Mr Major to rule out British participa-

tion in the initial launch of the currency, in 1999, he said that made it even more imperative that Britain should be part of the negotiations. "Giving ourselves a red card now, and fleeing the field when the game is still to be played, seems to me to

be a dereliction of responsibility."

Mr Major said the consequences of a weak currency would be disastrous for the whole of Europe. The breakdown of the European exchange rate mechanism had been bad enough. "That would be a teddy bears' picnic compared to what would happen if a single currency collapsed," he said.

"If all these things are going wrong, we need to try and stop them going wrong. Can you stop them going wrong, can you win a football match if you're not on the pitch? Of course you can't."

will." But the Tory Eurosceptics showed no sign of retreat in advance of this week's two-day Commons debate, the weekend Dublin summit - and the Barnsley East by-election that will formally wipe out the Tory majority for the first time since 1979.

John Redwood said no one was asking Mr Major to leave the negotiations. Brussels was now "knee-deep in fudge", he added: "Most people in the party feel that you influence a debate by having a view."

The Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, said: "He has at last said he will put the national interest before party interests. If he had established this earlier his party would not be in the mess it is

Police guard 'road rage' victim's fiancée

Charlie Bain

Tracie Andrews, the fiancée of the alleged "road-rage" murder victim Lee Harvey who was arrested in connection with his death over the weekend, remained in hospital under police guard last night after doctors said she was too ill to be interviewed. Ms Andrews, 27, was admitted to hospital last Wednesday after reportedly overdosing on sleeping tablets and tranquillizers. Police yesterday declined to name the woman they had arrested, but sources close to the inquiry confirmed that it was Ms Andrews, and that it could be a week before she would be well enough to be interviewed.



Tracie Andrews: Beaten up in the alleged 'road rage' attack, she is said to have taken an overdose and then been arrested

Mr Harvey, 25, had his throat slashed and was stabbed more than 15 times in an isolated country lane near his home in the Worcestershire village of Alvechurch a week ago. The only witness was Ms Andrews, who told police the attack happened after the couple's white Ford Es-

port Turbo overtook another car on Sunday night. She said a passenger in the mystery Ford Sierra had left his car and attacked Mr Harvey in the road after an argument with the pursuing driver. During an emotional press conference last week, she broke down in tears and was comforted by Mr Harvey's parents as she told how the fat man with "staring eyes" calmly walked away after the attack, leaving her cradling her dying boyfriend on the deserted lane.

Job schemes too confused for trainees

Exclusive
Fran Abrams

The Government's attempts to cut unemployment are badly co-ordinated, confusing and often of low quality, according to a leaked report from the bodies set up by ministers to oversee training for people out of work. The draft policy document, which will be used to lobby ministers, civil servants, employers and industry, is bound to prove highly embarrassing.

Drawn up by the national co-ordinating body for the 81 Training and Enterprise Councils in England and Wales, it also says the benefits system discourages unemployed people from looking for work. The TECs spend £1.2bn each year on training programmes which also include posts for young people.

There is no proper monitoring of schemes to see whether they meet the needs of their region, the economy or the wider community, it says. Although some programmes are subject to inspection, there is little control elsewhere on their quality, it adds. Most unemployed people want a proper job rather than a scheme, it argues, and they often believe that government programmes are unlikely to help them find one. Research shows that the biggest disincentive to unemployed people thinking of going back to college is the fear that they will lose their benefit if they do so. The social security system is inflexible, and does not encourage people to take low-paid or part-time jobs, the report says. The Job Seekers' Allowance which was introduced in October and which compels claimants to sign agreements to look for work, will only make matters worse. Mr Byers said the document was "the clearest possible condemnation of the Government's failure to adequately tackle the question of long-term unemployment."

QUICKLY

Major no to Sinn Fein
A "phony" IRA ceasefire would not give Sinn Fein access to the political talks being held between the Government and the parties of Northern Ireland, John Major warned. Page 2

Vote stays rigged
The Serbian authorities dashed hopes of a compromise in the nation's growing political crisis yesterday when the Supreme Court rejected an opposition appeal against the official rigging of election results. Page 8

Fighter jet millions
British aerospace factories stand to earn tens of millions of pounds after Boeing was short-listed for the project to build the next generation fighter jet for the US and Britain. Page 16

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news

A boy of nine helps a nation honour his daddy



Frances Lawrence (above, right) the widow of the murdered headmaster, Philip Lawrence, with her children, (from left), Maroushka, Mylanwy, Unity and Lucien, at a ceremony yesterday at which a memorial to her husband was

unveiled by youngest child, Lucien, nine, at the spot where he was killed. Politicians and religious leaders urged the nation to follow Mr Lawrence's example. Helped by the Duchess of Kent, Lucien stepped on to a small dais

in front of the marble plaque. As his family and a crowd of more than 200 people looked on, he said: "I shall now unveil the memorial to my daddy. He then pulled back the curtain covering the plaque on a wall out-

side the gates of St George's School in Maida Vale, north-west London, near the spot where Mr Lawrence was stabbed as he helped a pupil being attacked by a gang. There was tight security around the school due to the

presence of a VIPs including the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and following a failed abduction attempt on Lucien from his home by bogus social workers last week. Photograph: Michael Stephens/PA

Swedes turn to Britain for a bargain

Clare Garner and Diane Coyle

The seasoned bargain-hunter knows it is necessary not just to shop around, but to shop around the world to get good value for money. Why else would the Swedes and Danes be doing their Christmas shopping in Oxford Street this year? Scandinavians are turning their backs on expensive home cities such as Copenhagen and Stockholm and heading for cheaper European centres such as Brussels, Frankfurt and London.

The League Table of Global Living Costs, published today and based on price comparisons across 121 big cities, is compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit for expatriate businessmen, but could just as well double up as an essential price guide for any serious international shopper.

Tokyo tops the charts, although the weakening yen means it is not quite as expensive as at its peak in June 1995. In London, ranked 28th and five per cent dearer than New York, prices have not changed much since June.

Not surprisingly, New York, which has moved from 36th to 32nd place - is America's most expensive city. Chicago is second - ranked 45th along with Auckland, Melbourne and Wellington. San Francisco is 51st, and Los Angeles and Miami joint 58th. Beyond the border, Mexico will not necessarily yield the bargains it once did. For the cost of living there is increasing due to the continuing high inflation after the devaluation of the peso at the beginning of last year.

Although changes in rankings are due mainly to the strength of the dollar against the yen and European currencies, the results of the six-monthly survey sheds a clear light on weak inflationary trends across the world. In only a few countries, such as Mexico, is the cost of living rising significantly.

So those who are set on shopping in Tokyo and Osaka, ranked first and second in the world respectively, can console themselves with the fact that prices in these cities have dropped by nearly a quarter in the past 18 months.

Low-pay benefits subsidise cowboy bosses, says Labour

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

The number of low-paid families drawing state benefits is rocketing and will cost employees the equivalent of 2p on income tax over the next five years, according to Labour Party analysis of official figures.

Based on statistics produced by the House of Commons library, Labour points out that "in-work" payments are expected to total £21.9bn in the years to 2001 - costing a typical family £260 a year in tax.

Using Government figures, Ian McCartney, Labour's chief employment spokesman, showed that the proportion of families drawing family credit had jumped in virtually every

area of the country by between 20 and 50 per cent in two years. In some parts of Britain the percentage had doubled.

Having attempted to awaken the conscience of the electorate in support of statutory minimum wage, Labour yesterday appealed to the wallets.

Mr McCartney said Labour would make the introduction of the minimum wage a priority. "We will ensure that taxpayers' money is used to get people back to work, not thrown away by subsidising cowboy bosses."

While the Government emphasises the burden on companies of a statutory minimum wage, Labour has attracted increasing support from employers on the basis that their tax is subsidising com-

petitors who pay their staff less. The analysis by Mr McCartney denotes a significant shift in the party's argument for raising the wages of the poorest workers.

Mr McCartney's assertions, however, also reveal that Labour has little intention of conceding to unions' demands for a minimum wage of £4 an hour or more.

In a statement the employment spokesman points out that 342,000 workers earn less than £1.50 an hour and that 2 million were paid less than £2 an hour. It is increasingly clear that a future Blair administration will be thinking in terms of a minimum near the £3 mark, which most experts predict will have a minimal impact on employment.

The House of Commons library found that over the past five years the average real growth of in-work benefits has been 14 per cent a year. Mr McCartney says that continued growth at the same rate would mean that by 2000 low pay would cost the taxpayer £5.8bn a year.

He pointed out that "inadequate" pay which has to be topped up by benefits funded by the taxpayer was often used by unscrupulous employers to minimise costs and undercut their competitors.

Mr McCartney said: "The Government's failure to tackle poverty pay could cost families across Britain £1,300 each in the 'Tory low pay tax' over the next five years."

He said it was disgraceful that

while the Government had allowed some privatised utilities to pay little or no tax since privatisation, it was prepared to burden taxpayers with an extra 2p in the pound levy to support "Scrooge" employers.

"Benefits have an important part to play in helping people into work, but without a minimum wage the system is wide open to abuse. A national minimum wage would help the low paid and prevent cowboy employers using low pay to undercut their competitors, leaving the taxpayer to pick up the tab."

Labour plans to set up a low pay commission, made up of employers, unions and independent representatives, to advise the Government on the level of the minimum rate.

Major fears new 'phoney' ceasefire

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A "phoney" IRA ceasefire would not give Sinn Féin access to the political talks now being held between the Government and the parties of Northern Ireland, John Major said yesterday.

On the eve of London talks with John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, John Major told BBC television's *On the Record* he was not optimistic about another ceasefire, though he could not rule one out.

"But what I do not wish to see would be a phoney ceasefire - a ceasefire simply to score public relations victories and to try and have Sinn Féin parachuted into the talks without actually giving up the violence which has sustained the IRA for so long," Mr Major said.

In retrospect, he added, the last ceasefire had been "a phoney", even though the Government had thought it was real at the time.

"What did we subsequently find out, we subsequently found out [that] within days of declaring the ceasefire, Sinn Féin/IRA were filling garages in London with Semtex and explosives. That's not a genuine ceasefire."

The tone of Mr Major's remarks suggest a further hardening of the British line following the recent unilateral



Major: Progress dependent on IRA actions, not time

'Within days of its last declaration, the IRA was filling London garages with Semtex'

Downing Street statement, replying to overtures from John Hume, leader of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party, and from Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin.

But that will not surprise Mr Bruton. It is believed that the scope for British initiatives is fast diminishing, if not gone, in the run-up to the general election and much of today's Downing Street talks will be concentrating on European issues.

With Sinn Féin/IRA requiring a timetable guarantee for entry into political talks, Mr Major said yesterday that he would not take a "fake" ceasefire path again. "We've done that, and we were betrayed by Sinn Féin/IRA who said one thing when they were doing another. This time it needs to be real."

Asked how long he would wait before accepting a ceasefire was real, he said: "I will not wait for too long to see if it is to be sustainable - I am not going to give you a time. It depends on actions, not on the passage of a few days or weeks."

That credibility would have to be tested by intelligence reports from the security services, rather than the passage of time, or the words of Sinn Féin/IRA.

As for his decision to make last month's unilateral statement, the Prime Minister said: "If I had not published our position, in the conspiracy atmosphere that so often exists in Northern Ireland politics, many people would have feared that we were doing a backstairs deal with Sinn Féin and with the IRA. We were not."

PM warns of weak links in single currency

Anthony Bevins and Diane Coyle

The European Union is faced with two choices over the single currency when it decides which countries should be allowed to ride the first wave in 1999.

It can either start small, with a few countries that have firmly established the convergent economic stability that is required, or it can fudge the terms of entry and allow even the most profligate applicants to join up.

The Treasury preference is for a hard-core foundation which can be built on securely as other countries fall into step on convergence.

As John Major said in his *On the Record* interview yesterday, the alternative could be too dire to contemplate - because it could fail and the consequences would hit all members of the EU, whether they belonged to the single currency or not.

He said that if a weak country crept into the currency, its uncompetitive vulnerability would soon be exposed "and it would get very large amounts of unemployment, structural unemployment, on a very large scale."

"What would happen then?" he asked. "Then they would call everyone together, and say, 'We must find some expenditure to

help this country out of its difficulty'."

"Who is going to pay for that?" The Prime Minister said that none of the big contributors - Germany, France or the UK - would want to bail out the weak link in the chain.

"That is not a club we would want to belong to," a senior Government source told *The Independent* last week. "It would do immense damage and the Prime Minister should cast his vote against it."

Yesterday, Mr Major made it plain that he would do just that. "There's no point in it coming together for one single day if some countries are going in different directions. It needs to be a sustainable position."

There is a strong Treasury view that weak economies will not be allowed into the single currency, if only because German public opinion would not wear it.

In evidence to the House of Lords European Communities Committee Gus O'Donnell, the Treasury's deputy director of macroeconomic policy, pointed out that the Maastricht treaty referred to "the durability of your fiscal position; the sustainability". That was the message repeated by the Prime Minister yesterday. For the moment, he appears to be pushing at an open door.

significant shorts

Huge delays after Heathrow crash-landing

Hundreds of flights to and from Heathrow airport were delayed yesterday after a plane carrying 45 people crash-landed.

The left undercarriage of the KLM Dutch National Fokker 50, a twin-engine turboprop, collapsed after landing, causing the aircraft to spin round.

The pilot had become aware of a problem with the landing gear when a warning light came on during the flight from Rotterdam. He informed air traffic control, who alerted the emergency services. Passengers said the pilot circled Heathrow for 45 minutes while he tried to get the landing gear to work.

Sheriff Fahmy, a 35-year-old Egyptian businessman, said: "When we landed the first touch was fine, but then we felt the main undercarriage break and the left side of the plane just went down with a tremendous bang." Fire engines smothered the aircraft with foam as it was evacuated.

Lung cancer services a lottery

Lung cancer services are a lottery in which some patients receive inadequate care, a British Thoracic Society conference was told.

Particular problems were poor access to specialist care for the elderly and those in lower socio-economic groups, unacceptably long waiting times, and variations in practice.

Older patients were significantly less likely to receive active treatment for lung cancer, said Dr Robin Rudd, consultant chest physician at the London Chest Hospital.

He cited a study in Southend, Essex, which showed that surgery was undertaken in 18 per cent of those under 65, 12 per cent of those aged 65 to 74, and only 2.1 per cent of those over 75.

Seal of approval

Animal lovers are being asked to "adopt" a seal to help fund research into secretive colonies living in sea caves in cliffs at Land's End. The pioneering study of seals by Stephen Westcott is threatened by lack of money, said Cornwall Wildlife Trust. Its £15-a-year seal adoption scheme, which entitles the "parent" to an information pack and updates, will help the project continue.

£8m cannabis haul seized

Cannabis with a street value of £8m was seized from a ship by customs officers. The two-and-a-half ton haul was found off west Wales on Saturday and seven people were arrested. Customs said it was likely the drugs were from Morocco.

Carers under pressure

More than a third of people who care for an elderly relative, including increasing numbers of men, have a full-time job.

Research by Help The Aged warned that ignoring working carers could have significant economic consequences. Employee-carers reported taking an average 3.8 days in the last six months off because of their responsibilities.

The study suggests that lower productivity, higher absence rates and increased staff turnover are a consequence of ignoring the needs of working carers and urged employers to see the issue as being as significant as child-care. Glenda Cooper

Seeing the light

A couple have been ordered to camouflage their bright yellow burglar alarm because it clashes with the stone houses in their village, a conservation area.

John and Jill Sharp fitted the box on the front of their home in Windrush, Gloucestershire, in the Cotswolds, but neighbours disliked the contrast with the yellow of the stone buildings.

Cotswold District Council has issued a notice telling them to repaint it but they have refused. "The colour is designed to deter a housebreaker and any attempt to camouflage it would negate this," Mr Sharpe said.

Church clashes: four in court

Four men appeared in court charged with public order offences following loyalist protests on Saturday night outside a Catholic church in Ballymena, Co Antrim.

Three were given bail and the fourth was remanded in custody at a special sitting of the town's magistrates court. A further six men are due in court in Belfast today facing charges related to an attack on a Catholic house.

Operation by telephone

Paul Robson became a do-it-yourself medic when he removed a 10-inch tube left in his wife's body after an operation - as a nurse gave instructions by phone.

South Tyneside Healthcare NHS Trust has since apologised to Gillian Robson, of Byker, Newcastle, who is awaiting cash compensation.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

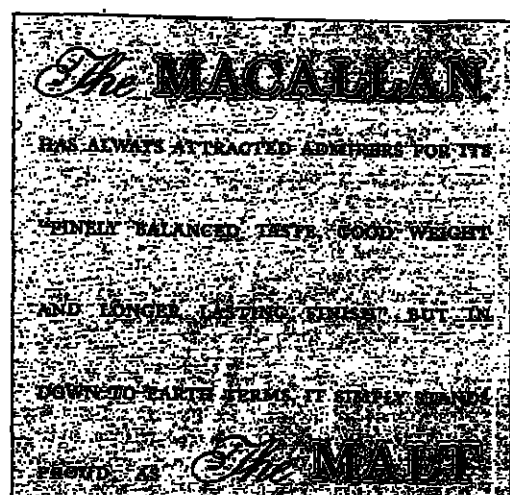
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The MALT



Father to sue over 'mad cow' death

Clare Garner

The father of two young children whose mother died of the human equivalent of mad cow disease is to sue the Government for compensation on their behalf. In the first case of its kind, Thomas Kerr, 41, is seeking damages for Gemma, nine, and John, seven, who are now being brought up by their 65-year-old grandmother.

When Mr Kerr's ex-wife, Janice Stuart, died in September, aged 35, she became the 13th person in the UK to have contracted the new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD). Since then, a 14th case of the new strain of the degenerative brain disease has been recorded.

Mr Kerr, of Milton of Campsie, near Glasgow, intends to prove that the Government was negligent in failing to warn the public of the dangers of eating beef. If his legal action is successful it will open the floodgates for claims from other families of victims.

Two weeks ago *The Independent* revealed that, according to new estimates based on cases such as Ms Stuart, the new variant of CJD could kill hundreds of people every year, reaching a peak in about seven years.

Unlike the normal form of CJD which usually affects people over 60, the new variant of CJD has mostly affected people under 40, including a number of teenagers. It is incurable, and the symptoms, which take two years to develop, include depression and failing coordination, followed by dementia and coma leading to death.

Ms Stuart was treated for depression for almost 10 months before she was admitted to the psychiatric unit of Woodilee Hospital, at Kirkintilloch, Strathclyde, in August. When she became unsteady on her

feet, doctors thought it was the side-effects of anti-depressants. Confirmation that she had been suffering from the new strain of CJD came only after her death.

Mr Kerr, a housing manager with East Dumfriesshire council, only learnt that his ex-wife was seriously ill when her mother contacted him in August. He had not seen his two children since his divorce two years earlier.

This weekend he insisted that in taking the case to court he was not seeking to gain personally. "As far as I am concerned they [the Government] allowed it to happen, and I am confident it can be shown that it is the Government which must take responsibility for these deaths," he said.

To his former mother-in-law, Eleanor, no amount of money can compensate for the loss of her daughter. Speaking from her home in Stirlingshire yesterday she said: "I'm all for justice, but there's no money could compensate for a life of a dear person - and a mother."

She added, however, that she wanted the public to be made aware of the "cover-up" and would be pleased if the children, for whom she has always been a "second mum", were awarded compensation in the process. "If Gemma and John get compensation I'll be really pleased for them. They're only nine and seven. I'm 65. I'll not be here forever."

Mr Kerr, who has the backing of his local MP, Tom Clarke, is prepared for a long campaign. "I will see this right through to the end and I won't stop until Gemma and John get what is rightly due to them, or until they are refused," he said. "There is something morally wrong about this situation, and if at the end of the day they can benefit from me drawing attention to it, then so much the better."

Jeweller rings bells with head-turning gag



Julie Richards, of the National Museum and Gallery in Cardiff, trying on The Pavlovian Trainer, a piece of jewellery by Ira Sherman, designed to curb verbosity - part of the touring exhibition 'New Times, New Thinking. Jewellery in Europe and America', in Cardiff until March Photograph: Rob

Call to keep morality out of school

Judith Hadd
Education Editor

Government advisers on the National Curriculum should steer clear of morality, a right-wing think tank warns today.

A pamphlet from Politeia says plans to issue a list of moral values for schools will harm rather than help the teaching of morality and threaten academic study. Dr John Marenbon, the author, who is a fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, ridicules the proposal from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which has drawn up the list, that morals should be taught in all lessons including the humanities, science and even PE.

"Moral mathematics is not discussed but no doubt the best brains in the authority are working on it," he says. The guidelines, says Dr Marenbon, are vacuous. They are neither precise rules of behaviour such as "Don't lie" or "Keep your promises" nor general moral first principles such as "Act so as to maximise the balance of pleasure over pain in the universe" and "Act in accord with what you believe to be God's wishes."

Instead, in their desire to avoid disagreement, the advisers have resorted to a set of middle-level principles, many of which are contradictory. For instance, the pamphlet says, children are told they must "try to understand their own character, strength and weaknesses" and immediately afterwards "to develop a sense of self-worth."

"But what human is there who does not value himself less the better he knows himself?" asks Dr Marenbon. Equally questionable, he says, is the idea that pupils should "preserve areas of beauty wherever possible." It is rarely impossible to preserve a beautiful area but this may conflict with other principles in the list such as increasing economic prosperity.

□ *Moral Maze: government values in education* from Politeia, 28 Charing Cross Road, London. Price £5.

The Sons of Cornwall are on the march, and this time it's away from London

Half a millennium ago, 15,000 Cornish rebels marched on London. Now thousands of Cornish people are planning to do it again in the form of a commemorative march calling for greater investment in the region and the cutting of ties to England.

A resurgence in Celtic language and music together with chronic unemployment and perceived "racism" by the English have reinforced the concept of Cornish identity to unprecedented levels in modern times.

A record number of Cornish Nationalist candidates will stand in the General Election, on a platform which demands Cornish language lessons in schools and a separate Cornish Assembly.

Nationalist politicians will be seeking to capitalise on the 500th anniversary of the An Gof rebellion next year, when 15,000 Cornish marched on London and fought the English army at Blackheath, south of the capital.

The 1497 rebellion, a protest at an English tax levied to raise money for a war in Scotland, led to the drawing and quartering of the two leaders, Michael Joseph An Gof and Thomas Flamank, and the death in battle of 2,000 rebels. In May, the march will be re-enacted peacefully, culminating in a mass celebration of the Cornish identity in London, with trade shows and cultural performances including a service in the Tower of London and a concert by the Cornwall Youth Orchestra in the Barbican.

Although the celebrations are ostensibly non-political, and will include those who do not advocate separatism, they represent a great opportunity for the nationalists. Dick Cole, spokesman for the Mebyon Kernow (Sons of Cornwall) Party, said: "This is a very important year for us. We have got to go for it." Mebyon Kernow's candidate for South East Cornwall is Paul Dunbar, 49, a vineyard-owner from Liskeard.

West of the Tamar, the beat of the nationalist drum can be heard again, writes Ian Burrell

Already canvassing for votes, he is angry at the drain of local workers across the River Tamar to "England".

"What we need in South East Cornwall is the emphasis on indigenous enterprise and reducing the necessity for people to commute to Plymouth. It's over



Paul Dunbar: 'Our agenda is set in Cornwall for Cornwall'

the border, it's big enough already and it doesn't do us any good," he said.

Alan M Kent, who is among a new breed of young Cornish novelists and poets, said: "The new literature is looking at the real Cornwall not the Cornwall of Ross Poldark and historical romance or the Cornwall of Arthurian legend. It's a rebirth after 100 years of stagnation. A

century ago, the bottom fell out of the mining industry and Cornwall collapsed. It has taken 100 years for it to reclaim its identity again.

"Cornish nationalism has become more sophisticated and organised, looking to promote the Cornish as an indigenous British ethnic group who should have the same status afforded to the Welsh and Scots."

Rob Burton, a lecturer at the University of Exeter, has carried out research comparing the Cornish situation with the national identities which have emerged in the former Yugoslavia. He said: "What has been interesting is the resurgence of Cornish identity among young people." Cornish youth has adopted surfing as its national sport, with participants decorating their boards with Celtic symbols, and the yellow Cornish tartan has become fashionable as a mini-skirt.

Many first-time voters were born during the 1970s when an earlier revival in Celtic identity, led to many youngsters being brought up to speak Cornish. The cultural revival has also been stirred by interest from the migrant communities of the Cornish diaspora who left after the collapse of the mining industry to start new lives in America, Australia and Mexico.

Amy Hale, an American researcher who is carrying out a study of the revival in Cornish culture for the University of California Los Angeles, said: "This is a really exciting place to be right now. There is a world climate which is allowing what is happening here to be taken much more seriously."

Philip Payton, of the Institute of Cornish Studies at the University of Exeter, who last month published *Cornwall*, the first history of the county from

a Cornish perspective to be written in a generation, said there were plans for a Cornwall University in Penzance.

Increasing numbers of local cars have stickers with the word "Kernow" and throughout the region, English Heritage signs at sites of Celtic monuments have been vandalised and dubbed "Cornish Heritage".

The EC has now designated Cornish as an officially-recognised living language and last month the Commission for Racial Equality formally recognised the separate identity of the Cornish people for the first time. The acknowledgement could form the basis for future claims against discrimination by English employers or institutions.

The ancient Cornish Stannary Parliament, based in Truro, has applied to the National Statistics Office demanding that respondents to the 2001 Census be allowed to describe their racial status as "Cornish". There are nearly half a million people living in Cornwall, of which roughly half were born Cornish though many newcomers have also embraced the culture.

The Stannary Parliament was set up by charter by Henry VII in 1508 and maintains the right to veto English legislation. In reality, the parliament has little power and in turn believes that Cornwall County Council, which is responsible for the day to day running of the region, does nothing more than pay lip service to London.

Senior members of the parliament are furious with Prince Charles for his perceived bias towards the English in the Duchy of Cornwall. They are especially angered by his decision to allow English Heritage to take care of Tintagel Castle, which is believed to be the ancient seat of King Arthur's court. Colin Murley, one of the Cornish parliament's Stannators, is no Royalist. "Prince Charles is obviously more interested in promoting the English nation than the Cornish," he said.

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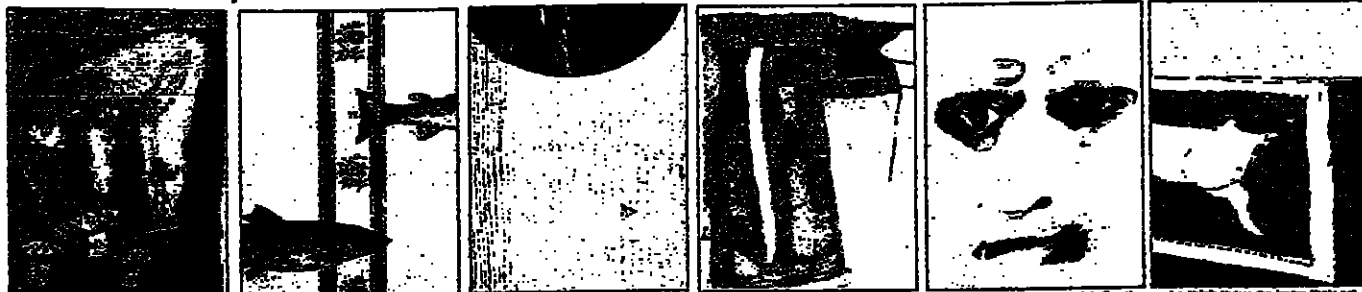
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مركز الال

Art student picks up a small fortune

£30 for a postcard? Yes, but one of these might be worth £4,000



Answers on a postcard: The six works above were featured on the front of *The Independent* last Thursday. The artists were (in the order the pictures are shown): Michael Rooney, Royal Academician; Rob Kessler, student; Alan Smith, teacher at the RCA; Peter Blake, Patrick Proctor, Royal Academician; David Bowie

David Lister
Arts News Editor

An art student, Perie Kemal-Ork, 27, hit the jackpot at the Royal College of Art's charity sale of unsigned postcard-sized paintings.

She paid £30 for what turned out to be the most valuable work among the 1,600 on display – an acrylic cityscape by Frank Auerbach, estimated to be worth £4,000.

It was not a lucky guess, Ms Kemal-Ork said yesterday when the names of the artists were revealed by the Royal College. "A friend of mine bought an Auerbach last year, and I

studied it. This one was very similar in style. As soon as I saw it I knew it was him. But there was an element of risk. There are a lot of pastiches around."

Ms Kemal-Ork has applied to study at the RCA, having completed a fine art degree course at Birmingham. The RCA exhibition – at which all the postcard-sized works, signed only on the reverse, were on sale for £30 – proved trebly fortunate for her. As well as the Auerbach she bought a work by the abstract painter Albert Irvin, whose style she also recognised, and which is estimated to be worth £500. She also exhibited a still life herself, which got her £30 of her £60 expenditure back.

"The two I bought have turned out to be worth a lot," she said, "but I won't sell them unless I fall on very hard times. I want to start my own collection, like Degas."

The exhibition and sale of works, entitled "Absolut Secret", raised £40,000 for the students' hardship fund at the Royal College of Art. The sponsor, Absolut Vodka, is giving an extra £5,000.

Many of the 600 exhibitors were students but more half were well known artists, including Eduardo Paolozzi, Paula Rego,

Maggi Hambling, Sir Denys Lasdun and Elizabeth Blackadder. Even for the *cognoscenti* there were traps. Purchasers who thought they recognised Peter Blake's style might have ended up with a work by another member of his family: his nine-year-old daughter Rose also

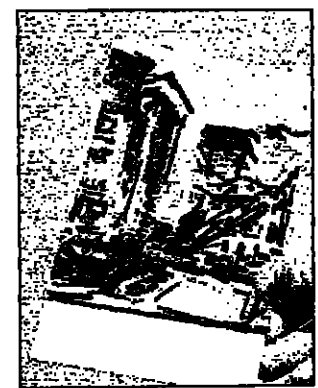
had an entry in the exhibition. Susie Allen, who curated the four-day exhibition, at which every work was sold, said: "It really caught the public imagination. There were queues of over 200 at a time to buy the postcard-sized paintings and drawings. Because there were

no signatures on them, everyone was in the same situation. They had to choose from the heart. And certainly they didn't all guess right. One person was dancing with delight certain he had bought one by Anton Tapies, Spain's best living artist. It was by a student."



Not for sale: Perie Kemal-Ork with purchases, which she says will form part of the collection she is building up, "like Degas"

Photograph: Mykel Nicolau



Prize image: A closer look at the Auerbach postcard

GPs' spending on private care for patients soars

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Family doctors are spending fourteen times as much money on private health care for their patients as they were four years ago, a health minister has revealed.

The figures, given in response to questions from a Labour MP, show that fundholding general practitioners spent £52.5 million in the private sector in 1994-5. In 1991-2, they spent just £3.7 million.

Kevin Hughes, a Labour whip and member for Doncaster North, says that in his own constituency GPs spent more than £500,000 outside the NHS, while the local hospital had to close wards because of the loss of income it had suffered.

Fundholding GPs, who now make up more than half of the total number, receive their budgets from their local health authorities but are able to spend them where they choose.

Mr Hughes said that private providers were often able to offer cheaper services because they only took on routine cas-

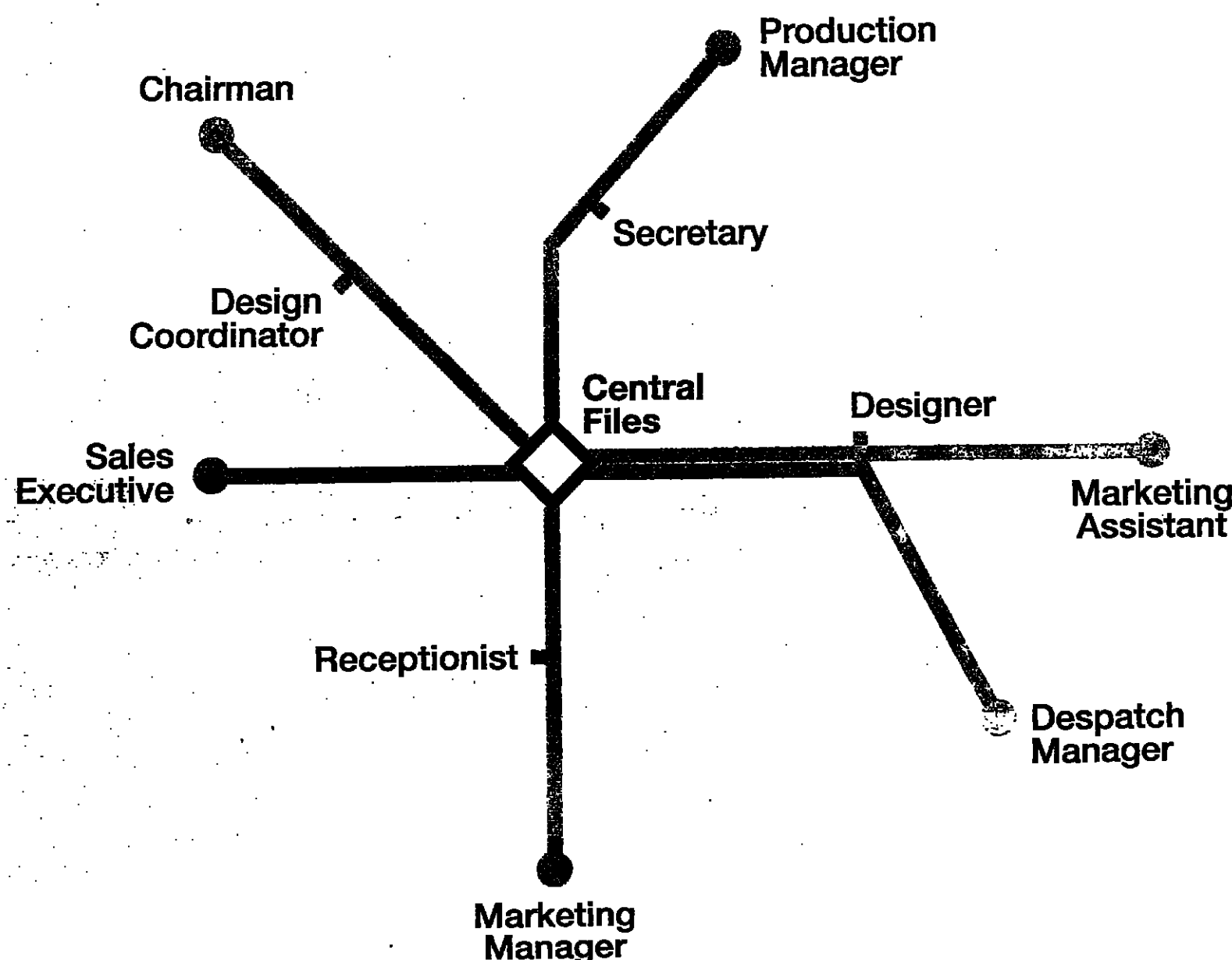
es while NHS hospitals had to offer expensive emergency and long-term care. "The government is slowly but surely privatising the health service. Whilst they are saying they are not doing this, more and more money is being spent in the private sector."

The British Medical Association says that most of the money spent in this way is used for fertility services, abortions and hospices. Fundholders also use their extra freedom to "bulk buy" anything from knee operations to care for the terminally ill, and are able to save money by doing so.

A spokesman for the Association added that many doctors were using private health services because they were obtainable more quickly and helped to keep waiting lists down.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health, said some of the money could be being spent with charitable organisations.

"Both health authorities and GP fundholders are charged with purchasing the best possible care whether this be NHS or other providers," she said.



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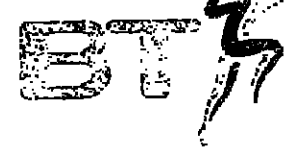
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DAILY POEM

Voice

By Liu Hongbin
(translated by Elaine Feinstein)

As soon as we leave the tunnel of our birth,
even before our bodies are cleaned of blood
we all cry out, and those sharp cries
are the first signs of our talent for speech.
Later, we escape in many directions, and our voices
are lamps of fire in the rain, which fly up
looking for their own light
as flocks of birds rush through the trees
or birdsong falls along forest paths.
That is how our voices mingle with air
Who can forbid something so natural?

World, we must have a talk about this.
We don't need any language to do it.
Nature's a womb not a refrigerator.
Our voices which are spacious as the sky,
must not be frozen in us or we die.

The tongue is an unruly organ, writes Liu Hongbin. There is an old Chinese saying: "Trouble comes out of the mouth." The etymology of the word "prison" in Chinese stems from the concept of curtailing free speech. Prison is symbolised by two dogs guarding the mouth. China has been a prison for free speech for thousands of years, from the time of the first Emperor, Qin, who burned all books and buried scholars alive. In this century the Communists allowed only one voice – their own. To mark Human Rights Day tomorrow, Liu Hongbin reads with James Fenton at the City Church of St Michael, Cornmarket, Oxford at 8pm.

Ninth pensioner falls victim to food bug

Louise Jury

Britain's worst outbreak of *E. coli* poisoning claimed a ninth victim yesterday, an elderly woman who had been released from hospital two days ago after treatment.

Forth Valley Health Board announced that the woman, who has not been named, died at the Bank View private nursing home in Banknock, Stirling.

shire, where Arthur Nicol, 79, another victim, died on Friday. A spokeswoman said: "The woman had been released well from Falkirk Royal Infirmary on Friday after making a good recovery from *E. coli* infection. Sadly, she died earlier today."

A shocked member of staff at the nursing home said: "We cannot say anything at the moment."

Poisoning broke out last

month and tests by environmental health officers suggested the shop of John Barr, in Wishaw, North Lanarkshire, was the source of the infection. Strathclyde police and the Procurator Fiscal, the Scottish crown prosecutor, were called in to investigate the outbreak, amid claims that Mr Barr supplied cooked meats for an 18th birthday party after promising officials from North Lanarkshire

council that he would stop trading while inquiries were made. Health officials said there was no longer a potential risk from the outlets supplied by Mr Barr, this year's Scottish butcher of the year, providing that no cooked meats or meat products remained on the premises and a thorough clean-up was carried out.

Lanarkshire Health Board and environmental health offi-

cers said they were "satisfied that the potential risk of the transmission of *E. coli* 0157 from having stocked Mr Barr's products no longer exists". The Scottish Centre for Infectious Diseases said yesterday that the total number of people in Scotland showing symptoms of *E. coli* 0157 was 386, with the number of confirmed cases totalling 204.

Forth Valley Health Board

said the condition of an elderly woman in Stobhill Hospital was still "giving cause for concern" and Lanarkshire Health Board said doctors were also worried about the condition of 16 adults being treated at Monklands Hospital, Airdrie.

Seven staff at Mr Barr's shop have also shown traces of *E. coli* in tests by environmental health officers. It is understood that the workers became infected since

the outbreak began and were not carrying *E. coli* before the spread was first detected. Previous outbreaks of *Escherichia coli* 0157, known in the United States as the hamburger bug, have shown that up to five per cent of those infected can die.

The situation has been made worse in Scotland because of the number of older people who have been affected by the bug.

Elderly people are less able to fight the infection. The death comes as details emerge of research by scientists in Canada into a possible antidote to the poison. Clinical trials are expected to begin in Britain next year.

The first casualty of the Scottish outbreak was Harry Shaw, 80, one of a party of pensioners taken ill after a steak pie meal provided by Mr Barr.

Home alcopop kit condemned

Glenda Cooper

A do-it-yourself alcopop kit that promises to turn any fizzy soft drink alcoholic could attract under-age drinkers should be banned, anti-alcohol campaigners said yesterday.

It is yet another controversy to hit the alcopops industry which has this year seen a 40 per cent increase in duty in the Budget after concerns that the cartoon-style labels, bright colours and fruit flavours encouraged under-age drinking.

Earlier, the Advertising Standards Authority said advertisements for Bass's Hooper's Hooch should be removed because cartoon character on the label appealed to under-18s.

The new drink is called Splooch and is also being promoted with a cartoon-style label. It costs £4.99 from home brew shops or through mail or-

der. The instructions read: "Your Splooch can be mixed with any drink ie lemonade, orangeade, blackcurrant, fruit juices, colas etc..."

Home brew kits are not covered by the licensing laws so Splooch, made by Continental Wine Experts in Norwich, can be bought by under-18s.

Alcohol Concern condemned it as a "totally irresponsible extension" of the trend for making alcoholic products that appealed to under-18s and called for it to be removed from sale.

Nigel Griffiths, Labour's consumer affairs spokesman, said: "This product, which is freely available to teenagers and children, should be withdrawn."

Richard Danby, the makers' technical director, said the comments would be considered but added: "We are certainly not targeting under-age drinkers."

Poor nations losing out in trade deals

The poorest countries are losing out in the new trade order and today's international summit of trade leaders in Singapore should address the problem, says the charity Christian Aid, writes Louise Jury.

Ministers from 150 countries belonging to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which succeeded the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), are to discuss cutting tariffs and reducing protection.

But in a report published today, *The Lands that Trade Forgo*, Christian Aid argues that the opening up of markets has helped only the richer countries.

Peter Madden, the report's co-author, said: "There is no level playing field in international trade. Christian Aid believes there must be action to support poor countries if they are to become independent members of the global economic family."

The 48 poorest countries have 12 per cent of the world's population but only 0.4 per cent of global trade.

Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, who is leading the British delegation, said the Government wants greater free- ing up of trade, although business leaders have argued for consolidating existing deals.



Dream ticket: Arthur Scargill, head of Socialist Labour, and candidate Ken Capstick pledge to open six new mines

Photograph: Edward Webb

The old King Coal vies with New Labour to win a miners' legacy

The landscape has an eerie emptiness now the colliery buildings have disappeared and the slag heaps are grassed over, airbrushed out of the picture like victims of a purge.

On the surface, at least, the Labour Party by-election campaign in Barnsley East is the first not to be coal-fired. Virtually every local issue has its roots in digging coal, but not its solution: all the local pits have been closed.

In the absence of special interests, only the turnout and share of the vote could embarrass Labour. The contest caused by the death of Terry Patchett will formally end John Major's Commons majority on Thursday, whatever whim may take dissident Tory backbenchers.

For Labour, there could be an added filip. Twice in nine months, an overwhelmingly Labour electorate will have dispelled nagging doubts among activists about the S-word - socialism. The party can also see an encouraging profusion of its posters across the constituency and there is little oral evidence that former mining townships feel neglected in the party's pursuit of more-affluent Southern voters.

People have moved on since the 1984-85 miners' strike and come to terms with the pit closures of the early 1990s, according to Jeff Ennis, a 44-year-old miner's son, Sheffield teacher, Barnsley council leader, and Labour candidate.

"We're looking forward now. There are many positive things about the strength of mining communities that we can put to use to repair the alienation and exclusion people feel because of the way the Tories treated the coal industry," Mr Ennis said.

The Barnsley East by-election will bury a troubled past, writes Jonathan Foster

He can cite partnerships forged throughout the Dearne Valley between private and public sectors, road and factory building, measures with at least the potential to reduce unemployment. In mining towns like Grimsthorpe, Goldthorpe and Cudworth, it can reach 80 per cent. Across the constituency, it remains double the national average.

"In many respects New Labour was invented in Barnsley," Mr Ennis said. "We are one community."

Ken Capstick could cheer for the "one community" slogan, but go further. A former miner and Yorkshire Miners' Union official, his has for years been the emollient voice interpreting Arthur Scargill's socialism for the delicate. Mr Capstick resigned from the Labour Party in April, disgusted by the prospect of the Tory defector, Alan Howarth, being "shoe-horned" into a safe Labour seat.

Now he is fighting a safe Labour seat for Socialist Labour, the creation of Mr Scargill and the most plausible hard-left party to have sought electoral support since the war. It flourishes on grievance, and Mr Capstick has personal as well as political scores to settle with New Labour.

In 1991, he was the choice as candidate of a large majority of Labour members in neighbouring

Hemsworth. But Mr Capstick's candidature was vetoed by party bosses in London. There are many South Yorkshire Labour MPs supporting Mr Ennis vigorously who still feel Mr Capstick was badly treated and could have made a decent MP.

A similar purge of the Hemsworth candidates' shortlist was repeated this year, prompting Socialist Labour's election debut. The candidate won 1,193 votes, enough to save her deposit, but not frighten Labour badly.

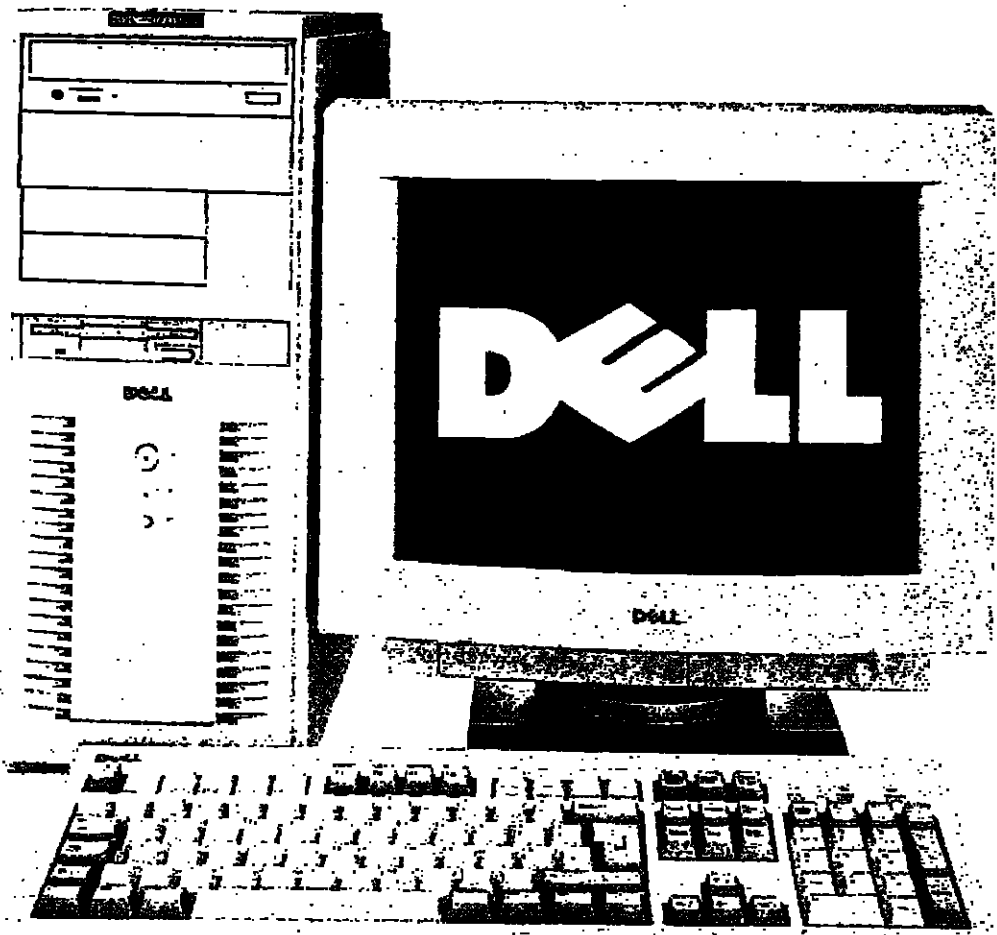
Mr Capstick was still loyal to Labour then, but felt imprisoned in a party moving to the right. "I feel liberated now, able to speak freely about the socialism I believe in," Mr Capstick said.

He and Mr Scargill have promised to open six new mines in the area, renationalise privatised industries, and double pensions. Unemployment will be ended by a four-day week, a ban on all non-essential overtime, and voluntary retirement on full pay at 55.

There are now "thousands" of individual members and affiliated organisations signed up to Socialist Labour, Mr Capstick says.

He would be delighted with 10 per cent of the vote, and says he has been encouraged by his reception. But the party does not appear to have struck a completely sympathetic chord in Barnsley East. "Arthur," as Mr Scargill is known, may have roused a powerful sense of loyalty to the union and the community but it is not a political dynamic transferred easily to a new party or captured in a manifesto, even less when that manifesto appears realistic only in Mr Scargill's dreams.

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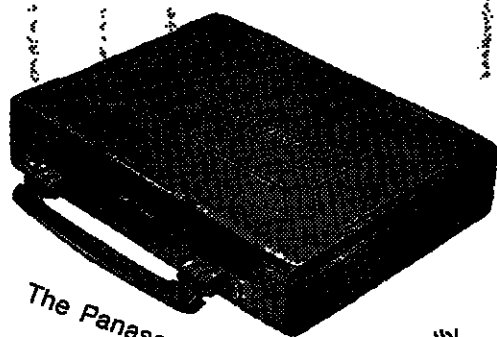
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Milosevic thwarts opposition as court annuls poll victories

Tony Barber
Belgrade

Serbia's Socialist authorities dashed hopes of a compromise in the nation's growing political crisis yesterday when the Supreme Court rejected an opposition appeal against official rigging of election results.

Within hours of the court's ruling, thousands of students and other anti-government protesters were marching in central Belgrade and the opposition Zajedno (Together) coalition vowed to prolong the three-week-old street demonstrations until President Slobodan Milosevic lost power.

Opposition leaders were clearly taken aback by the court's decision, which followed several signals from the authorities last week that they wanted to take the heat out of the crisis. Vuk Draskovic, one of Zajedno's three main leaders, said he feared Mr Milosevic was trying to goad the opposition into abandoning its peaceful methods of protest.

"I am expecting that tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, sometime soon, Milosevic will use police, maybe even the army, but we will not stop," he said. "He can arrest all of us, all of Serbia, but the only person in prison will be himself."

However, an opposition political adviser, Milan Bozic, said Mr Milosevic was more likely to try to grind down the opposition without force. "Maybe he will try to make General Winter do his work," he said.

By rejecting opposition demands that their victory in last month's municipal elections in Belgrade should be upheld, Mr Milosevic seems certain to incur still more criticism from Western governments. Having reacted cautiously when the street protests broke out, the United States and the European Union have gradually toughened their stance.

They say the verdict of the electorate in Belgrade and 14 other large towns where the op-



Unstoppable force: Zoran Djindjic, opposition victor in Belgrade's municipal elections, greeting demonstrators in the city this weekend Photograph: AP

position defeated the ruling Socialists must be respected if Serbia wants to return to international respectability. In particular, the EU will continue to deny Serbia preferential trade terms, and Mr Milosevic will not have access to international credits, essential to hauling Serbia out of its economic mess.

Although nothing is certain in a land where the law is sub-

ject to official whim, the Supreme Court's decision seemed to wipe out the prospect that Mr Milosevic might eventually acknowledge the opposition's electoral victory in Belgrade. The court decided that in five out of 46 electoral seats under review, opposition victories had been justifiably annulled.

Lawyers for the opposition said this decision indicated that

the same ruling would apply to the other 41 seats. However, even the loss of five seats would be enough to deprive the opposition of an overall majority in the 110-seat city council, since the total number of seats under its control would fall from 60 to 55.

The court's ruling bore all the hallmarks of a classic Milosevic ploy designed to confuse his op-

ponents. For the court dangled the prospect before the opposition of having exactly half the seats in Belgrade's city council and thereby acquiring just a taste of political power for the first time in Serbia since 1945.

At the same time, by switching the focus of the crisis to the obscure legal processes of the Supreme Court, Mr Milosevic has tried to divert attention

from the central issue: whether he should remain in power.

The opposition had hoped that, by winning recognition of its municipal election victories, it could build a platform for challenging Mr Milosevic in national polls next year. However, the court's ruling suggests the president will never let the opposition come to power through the ballot box.

A Basque daughter dedicated to forgiveness

Elizabeth Nash

On 26 March 1982, Cristina Cuesta, then 19, received a telephone call at home in the Basque city of San Sebastian to say that her father, Enrique, regional manager of the state telephone company, had been shot by an Eta hit squad as he was walking home for lunch. The separatists suspected him of tapping phones under police instructions and had killed his predecessor the year before for the same reason.

Cristina accompanied her father to hospital where he died. The horror transformed this middle-class, unpolitical Basque teenager into a campaigner who has persuaded tens of thousands to overcome their fear of Eta violence. She pioneered a pacifist movement that demonstrates, silently against Eta gunmen several times a week throughout the Basque country. Last week she was nominated for the EU's Women of Europe prize.

After Enrique's death, Cristina's mother had a nervous breakdown. Her sister Irene was only 14. Cristina abandoned journalism studies and took a job at Telefonica herself to support the family. "Fellow Basques killed my father supposedly to improve the conditions of other Basques, and

LOCAL HEROES

had made us victims," she says. "This thought obsessed me."

She talks with an intensity lightened by humour, showing no trace of the hatred she says dogged her for years. "Every time they announced the death or torture of an Eta member, I rejoiced. I couldn't forget. My friends found me impossible. But one day I decided I didn't want to keep on hating."

The turning point was the disappearance of an Eta suspect, Mikel Zabala, detained in 1985 by the Civil Guard and later found face down in a river. "Statements by Mr Zabala's mother affected me deeply. We were on opposite sides of the trenches, but I realised her grief was the same as mine and for the same reason."

Cristina resolved to seek reconciliation, and to encourage victims of violence to become more active. "At that time ordinary people kept quiet about what was happening. Everybody was afraid of reprisals. You might have an Eta sympathiser living next door."

In 1986, now 24, Cristina attended a conference on the media and violence and, trem-



Cristina Cuesta: "I decided I didn't want to keep on hating"

bling, appealed to fellow victims, including Mr Zabala's mother, to join her in a process of pardon and reconciliation.

Within two months, she received 3,000 letters of support and organised a meeting of those who had suffered on both sides of the Basque conflict.

"People began to gather together and overcome their fear, and these were the seeds of today's peace movement," Cristina devotes her life to the campaign, but still works at Telefonica. Her team offers support and professional help for "people threatened by Eta or beaten up by the police", and tries to promote its message in schools.

"But it is difficult because the teachers are divided and pro-Eta youth groups are well organised."

Radical young Eta sympathisers hurl stones and insults at

the peace demonstrators, who wear a blue ribbon and assemble with increasing confidence in San Sebastian and other Basque cities, calling for the freedom for Jose Maria Ortega Lara, a prison officer kidnapped in January, and Cosme Delaunay, a local businessman seized last month for not paying "revolutionary tax".

An indirect confrontation constantly floats in the atmosphere, but many Basques are no longer prepared to accept in silence that Eta kidnaps people in their name," Cristina says.

What about her personal life? Her face collapses with laughter. "I fell in love with the son of my father's predecessor who was assassinated, and we've been together seven years. Inaki and I haven't had time for children yet. But we will."

French no friends of flexibilité

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

Speaking in Nice last week, the former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur did something that no French politician with even one eye on power would be advised to do. He called in direct and unapologetic terms for greater flexibility in employment policy.

He said there should be simpler labour legislation, more and longer temporary contracts and a reduction in the sick-pay and other social obligations on small companies. He even suggested pilot projects in selected regions. It was a choice, he said, between "reform or decline".

Even four weeks ago, such sentiments were taboo. Then, the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, had only to hint that he might be considering a softening of employment protection legislation to prompt headlines like "Juppé's charter for sacking" and an immediate denial from his office that there was "any plan to make sacking easier".

In the weeks that have followed, however, flexibility has become a buzzword heard not just from predictable quarters such as the "Thatcherite" right of Alain Madelin, but increasingly from officials and even the occasional minister. Like it or not - and the French public do not like it at all - "flexibility" is insinuating itself on to the political agenda.

The government may have capitulated to the lorry drivers and it may have performed a spectacularly retrogressive U-

turn on the privatisation of the Thomson group, but it is talking more and more about job "flexibility" as a way of reducing the 12.6 per cent unemployment rate. It is as though the government is trying, by constant low-key bombardment with the word, to soften up public opinion.

"Flexibility" was used repeatedly in a television discussion programme this week by Mr Balladur's former spokesman and budget minister Nicolas Sarkozy, who is tipped to regain a ministry in the next cabinet reshuffle. Why not extend the possibility of temporary contracts beyond the present 18 months? he asked. At present such a contract has either to be made permanent or terminated after that time.

The left-leaning trade unions have taken a very dim view of the intrusion of "flexibility" into ministerial pronouncements. The Socialist Party has also voiced objections to any modification to labour laws "towards greater flexibility in dismissals". Part of the old-style Gaullist right also dislikes the new vocabulary and what they see as the American and British-style hiring and firing mentality that goes with it. In a clear dig at "reformers" like Mr Juppé, the former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua told Gaullists last weekend that he was "not ready to exchange the slogan of the French Republic - *liberté, égalité, fraternité* - for something supposedly more modern like *stabilité, compétitivité... and flexibilité*."

Italy prays Di Pietro is cleared

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

Last night they were saying a mass for Antonio Di Pietro in his home town of Montenero di Bisaccia in the mountains of central Italy. At his present residence of Curno, near Milan, a group of supporters staged a silent march to show their solidarity for a national hero in his hour of need.

Italy has spent the weekend in a state of shock after Mr Di Pietro, star of the anti-corruption investigations that

toppled the old political order four years ago, had all his homes and offices searched by police who believe he may have been corrupted by the very politicians and businessmen he once prosecuted.

The affair, which has seethed ever since Mr Di Pietro unexpectedly resigned from the magistrature two years ago, has blown up into a national controversy over the past few months, as Mr Di Pietro first joined the present government as public works minister, and then resigned last month

because of the growing judicial case against him.

Yesterday, Mr Di Pietro broke a 48-hour silence to lambast his enemies for mounting a "squalid vendetta" against him. According to judicial sources, the suspicion which prompted Friday's police raids is that he accepted money from a key witness in the anti-corruption investigations, a Swiss-based banker called Pierfrancesco Pacini Battaglia who was questioned for 11 hours in 1993 and then released.

Mr Pacini Battaglia has recently returned to the attention of the magistrature, this time as a key player in a new corruption scandal involving the state railway company and a prominent arms manufacturer, and is at present under house arrest following a lengthy period in preventive custody.

Mr Di Pietro said yesterday he could disprove the charges against him, but the affair has gone beyond a simple matter of ascertaining the truth and evolved into a full-blown power struggle pitting forces in politics and the judiciary.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

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CRACKING

19

Miami's image blown away by cash scandals

Phil Davison
Miami

It was *Miami Vice* come true. But the bad guys were not Colombian drug dealers. They were the men running the Florida city. Now, it might become known as *Miami Bust*.

This may be the pearl of the American South-east and the unofficial capital of Latin America, home to such stars as Madonna and Stallone, but the city is on the verge of bankruptcy after years of corruption. There is even a serious and growing move to wipe it from the map. And all of this in its centennial year.

The governor of Florida, Lawton Chiles, last week declared "a state of financial emergency" in the city because of a \$68m (£41m) budget shortfall, and said the state of Florida would supervise the city's finances. Experts say that by next March there will be no money left in the kitty to pay city employees. "The city of Miami is facing a crisis of monumental proportions," said Mayor Joe Carollo.

On the orders of Governor Chiles, a five-member financial emergency board from the state of Florida will today begin trying to sort out the mess, largely the result of a string of corrupt city governments.

The crisis was uncovered in September after an FBI "sting" led to charges against three senior officials, including the city manager Cesar Odio, a leading member of the Cuban-American community, for extorting seven-figure kick-backs. An emergency audit then showed that successive city governments had been cooking the books.

The emergency stunned Miami residents, still reeling from a series of crises. First there was Hurricane Andrew, in 1992, then came the tourist murders by gangs who preyed on foreigners who got lost coming out of the airport in rented cars. Earlier this month, the city even lost many of its beaches

when a freak storm eroded the sand. "With the latest emergency we're going to get a lot of negative publicity, and what's going to come out is that Miami is a banana republic, a city that can't govern itself," said Milan Dluhy of Florida International University. "The image is that no one is in charge and that they're corrupt."

Only this summer, the authorities were describing Miami as the city of the future, billing it as "the new Hollywood" after a spate of films was shot here. The place was booming, they said. So what went wrong?

Well, trouble had been brewing for years. Revenue projec-

'With the latest emergency, we're going to get negative publicity... what's going to come out is that Miami is a banana republic'

tions were exaggerated. Bond issues meant for pension and insurance schemes were actually used for daily operating expenses. Politicians avoided raising service fees so as not to lose votes. Every year, the city played a "shell game" with its budget, moving money from one fund to another to disguise the deficit. Money would be borrowed after the end of a fiscal year to balance the books from the year before.

It was on 30 August this year that the lid came off. The city's finance director, Manohar Surana, abruptly resigned, sparking rumours of a scandal in the city's finances. In September, an

FBI sting, codename Operation Greypalm and using a body-wired informant, led to indictments against Mr Odio and one of the city's five commissioners, Miller Dawkins.

They were accused of extorting \$1m (£609,000) from the Unisys computer company in return for a lucrative contract for new computers in city offices. FBI agents believe the kick-backs practice had been going on for years.

Mr Dawkins pleaded guilty and faces 15 years in jail. Mr Odio faces trial. His alleged involvement sent shock waves through the Cuban exile community, which controls much of south Florida's politics and is a powerful lobby in national politics.

The fact that the city commission has long been dominated by Hispanics - four of the present five members are Hispanic - and that two Hispanics were allegedly involved in massive corruption could also raise racial tensions here. While the Cuban exiles live in relative comfort in and around an area known as Little Havana, most blacks live in ghettos such as Liberty City and Overtown and still have trouble getting other than menial jobs.

If Miami falls apart, the rich-poor divide would undoubtedly widen. Even before last week's emergency, a group of residents had organised a petition to abolish Miami as an entity, describing it as unviable.

They hope to force a referendum next year. The idea would be to incorporate the city into the surrounding Dade County.

The likely outcome? Wealthier districts such as Coral Gables and Coconut Grove would break off on their own - Miami Beach, with its bustling art deco district and gilded condominiums, is already a separate municipality - leaving the poor areas, like Little Haiti, Liberty City and Overtown, to deteriorate into crime-ridden Third World-style slums with no means of support.



All white on the night: A Ukraine model wears a creation by the Kiev designer Ruska Polyakova during a show for a one-week alternative fashion festival in the city. Photograph: Gieb Garanish/Reuters

Great protester of Singapore refuses to quit

Thirty years after first being arrested, the island state's most durable critic is not giving in, writes Stephen Vines

The Singaporean activist Chia Thye Poh, one of the world's longest-serving political prisoners, has moved from jail to what he regards as purgatory. Released in 1989 after almost 23 years in prison, having been neither charged nor tried, he became part of what looked like a macabre joke with subsequent confinement to Sentosa Island, a Disney-style tourist centre.

Four years ago he was allowed to leave and live on the mainland with his elderly parents. Now, some 30 years after being arrested under the British-devised Internal Security Act, the restrictions on Mr Chia's movements keep flowing.

At the end of last month he was issued with a new restrictions order, lifting some restrictions but retaining all curbs on participation in political or community activities.

A painfully thin, soft-spoken 55-year-old with bad eyesight, Chia Thye Poh does not give the impression of being a serious threat to national security. Asked whether it is true that he is one of the longest-serving political prisoners, he says, "I was only in jail for 23 years". There is not a hint of irony in the use of the word "only".

Although tiny, Singapore seems to breed some very tough characters. The politics of the island state have been dominated by the tough and unflinching Lee Kuan Yew, who devised a system of iron rule with little space for opposition.

Yet the opposition has not been smuffed out because there are some equally tough people on the other side of the fence. None more so than Mr Chia.

He could, at the stroke of a pen, end his restrictions, indeed he could have secured early release from jail or have accepted an offer to be granted asylum in Canada, but Mr Chia is made of sterner stuff. The government wants him to renounce the banned Communist Party's use of force and terrorism. He insists that as he has never been a party member and never advocated terrorism, he cannot renounce beliefs he has not held. "I wouldn't be able to live in peace. I cannot go against my conscience," he says.

It took the Singaporean government 18 years to give a reason for Mr

Chia's detention. When it did, in 1985, it bluntly stated that Mr Chia had been instructed by the Communist Party to infiltrate the Barisan Sosialis Party to ferment illegal demonstrations and strikes to destabilise the government. Mr Chia gives a different version of events, saying that far from joining the Communist Party, he joined the legal Barisan Sosialis, became a member of parliament and resigned after the ruling People's Action Party decided to pull out of the federation with Malaysia.

His captors used to taunt him by taking him out on car drives to show how the country was developing while he remained incarcerated. Just sign this little piece of paper, they said, and you can be part of these exciting new developments. But Mr Chia remained unmoved.

His situation was, in many ways, a stand-off. He refused to sign the paper and the government said he could therefore expect to rot in jail for ever. They might have realised that he would be a tough nut to crack. Solitary confinement in a darkened room, confinement in an oven-like cell, two hunger strikes and a bout of forced feeding did nothing to shake him.

Mr Chia now inhabits a Kafkaesque world. When living in Sentosa he was forced to live in a one-room former guard house and told he had to pay rent for it. As he had no money he was offered a job as an assistant curator, but discovered that this was a civil service post, meaning he would need to obtain the permission of his boss before speaking to the media.

So he declined and worked as a freelance translator. Now that he is of an age when jobs are hard to come by, he is free to find a job with an employer of his choice. Similarly, now that he has practically no money, he is free to move out of his parents' house and live where he likes.

His internal security minders urge him to get out and about more and see the many changes which have occurred in Singapore, but he asks them, "How do you expect a person without freedom to have a mood for sightseeing?"

Instead Mr Chia spends most of his time in the anonymous Ang Mo Kio public housing estate, confident that he will eventually be vindicated.

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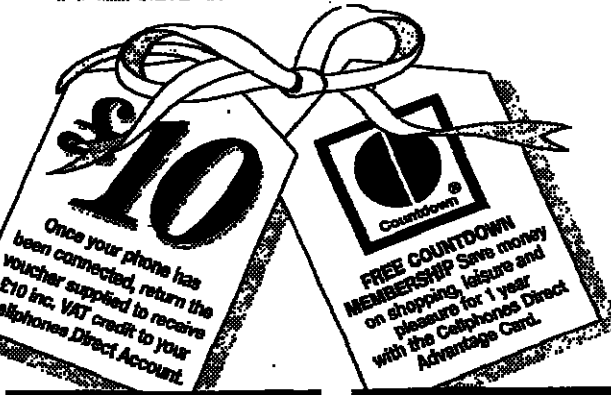
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Why Honest John will not come clean

So, the negotiation of a single currency in Europe is to be likened to a boys' game. After his *septem dies* horribles, John Major's much-hyped television interview relied heavily on red cards, football pitches and poker, laddish metaphors from an embattled prime minister. A master of bathos, Mr Major yesterday called the decision on going forward with monetary union the most important peace-time decision; others might claim that honour for accession to the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, but either way it seems that destiny is being approached in the spirit of a Las Vegas craps game. Our Number 10 card sharp says he is keeping his hand face down, to be revealed with a flourish in that city of sin, Amsterdam, in June next year. Ah, but won't there have been a general election by then? Well, yes: the possibility is that we shall never know what the deuce his position is.

It is important to see why that particular poker analogy, chosen with some care, is so disreputable. The government's formal position is not the problem. Mr Major's public stand, expressed yesterday in a television performance that only a mediocre interviewer could make seem polished, is the correct one for any British leader to take. Now is the moment for empiricism, in the strict sense of waiting to see the gathering evidence, in the run-up to that intergovernmental meeting in

Amsterdam next year, of the sustainability of the fiscal and financial commitments now being undertaken across Europe. No British government with any sense of recent economic history, or a feel for the decision-making processes within the European Union, could do anything but hold its horses.

So Mr Major is right when he insists on keeping his options open – if that is what he is really doing. His poker analogy, however, reveals in a not-so-Freudian way that he is in fact concealing his true position, not so much from his Continental counterparts as from the British public. All he tells them is that he rejects virtually everything about the European project that suggests further integration. No common policies for immigration or border control, no moves towards a common foreign policy, and certainly no common social policies. As for the extension of qualified majority voting, or extra powers to strengthen democracy through the European Parliament – no way. It would be logical, you might think, if we added common money to that list, since common money is a good deal more significant than, say, moves towards common policies on employment. Common money, after all, could have a huge effect on jobs.

But no; on common money, the cards are face down. Mr Major appears to have a view, but can't tell us what it is. He has to keep everyone guessing. If he

is keeping us all guessing because he is waiting before he makes a judgement (as Kenneth Clarke is doing), then that would be fine. He says the Government wants to stop European partners committing the folly of linking their currencies while their economics and fiscal circumstances are out of sync. But Britain's participation in the first wave of monetary union is not a precondition of offering that sage advice. No: the real reason Mr Major won't show his hand is that if he told the truth about what he really thinks – that there is no way the UK would enter the first wave of monetary union while he leads the Govern-

ment – then his party would fall apart. The public can see the evidence all around them. And it won't do for Mr Major to dismiss that evidence as Westminster froth. The division of view within the Conservative Party is not a media fantasy embroidered by a handful of obstreperous backbenchers. It is a fundamental party division over a fundamental issue, no different in potency to the tariff reform argument that split the party from top to bottom in the first two decades of this century. It is for that reason that the Major cards remain unshown. His objective is short-term and selfish. The game is not

rebuilding Europe, it is keeping the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his supporters sweet, and holding the Eurosceptic majority in his party at bay.

Building Europe is not at all like poker. And it is a game that cannot be played in foggy backrooms. It has to be played out in public. The sour aftermath to the Maastricht treaty showed how dangerous it is to build European union on the back of public ignorance and discontent. This great work must, above all, be a visible effort of democratic leaders. That does not prevent some leaders saying: no, movement in this direction is too far and too fast.

It was intriguing yesterday to hear hovering somewhere in Mr Major's mind that old quote by Nye Bevan about not going naked into the conference chamber. But Bevan, justifying his conversion to nuclear deterrence, meant above all that international negotiation in the national interest should be carried forward on the basis of public confidence and assent – and knowledge of what the government might offer to give or take. All the Prime Minister says by contrast is, "trust me, I'm honest John." He isn't. And there are too many in his party who too obviously don't trust him. And the electoral significance of that is that voters will withhold their trust, too.

Mr Major has no way out. If he bravely told the truth, that he will not lead his party or the country into mon-

etary union, his Government would split on the eve of an election. It will probably happen anyway – but he still can't tell the truth, because if he gives an inch, he gives a mile to the Eurosceptics, and he doesn't want to go all the way to withdrawal from Europe. That is what this is all about: does the Conservative Party want to be in Europe, or not? It is an issue that the party will be able to resolve only when out of power. Mr Major made it plain yesterday that it cannot be decided while he is in power.

My countryside, right or wrong

Soon we'll need a new phrase – something like "doing a Dimbleby". First Bel Mooney (Mrs Dimbleby) comes out last week as a holier-than-thou censor of cinema films. Today Jonathan, as president of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, launches a campaign against clutter in the countryside. By this he means things like road signs, phone boxes and other "unnecessary paraphernalia". Well, it is understandable that people who live in the countryside should want to preserve their property values, but it is a matter of some concern that upstanding liberal folk like the Dimblebys should turn reactionary in their maturer years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UK forgetting noble vision behind Europe

Sir: Britain must not be allowed to destroy the European Union. How come they got it so wrong after Europe? (4 December). The whole purpose of the Coal and Steel Community, the Common Market, the Community and the Union was to try to prevent 1914 and 1939 happening again. If Britain persists in her efforts to convert the Union into a purely commercial organisation, then she must quietly be told to go.

The Netherlands and Spain, whose empires disappeared as Britain's has done, have been resurrected as part of a greater European whole, but Britain's future will become that of a small offshore island. America does not want Britain as the 51st state.

But if this happens, I hope, speaking as a Scotsman, than an independent Scotland will become again the European nation it was before 1603 and 1707.

Dr JOHN SLEIGH
Monmouth, Wales

Sir: Why can we never look beyond our noses? In the Fifties we wrote off the nascent European Community when we could have led it. Instead we jeered at it, did our best to undermine it and ultimately climbed aboard at the wrong time and on the wrong terms.

Fifty years from now, the euro, underpinned by the might of the German economy, will be as firmly in place as the European Union is today. To that will be added the dollar and the currency of what could well be the world's most powerful economy, China.

Will that not leave the paltry pound sterling, with its dismal track record for the past 50 years, bobbing helplessly in the waves made by the super-currencies?

Of course there will be difficulties in the euro, but as Cardinal Newman said: "Ten thousand difficulties do not make a doubt".

PETER PRIOR
Weybridge, Surrey

Sir: Andrew Marr went straight to the core of the European debate ("We're having the wrong arguments", 4 December). Time is running out. Nationalism, that prehistoric monster, is gathering followers in Austria and France, and the "skinhead nationalists", as someone called the more rabid Euro-sceptics within the Government, may be tarred with the same brush. Of course we all have some nagging misgivings about our future, even the more federalist among us; but there is no alternative.

JEAN-BERNARD BRISSET
Coursion, France

Pension rights and wrongs

Sir: The National Insurance system is not a relic of the sentimental left ("Why I should give back my widow's pension", 4 December). It is a critically important part of the new democracy set up after the Second World War, and founded on the work and thoughts of politicians of the right, left and centre in a working group appointed by Winston S Churchill (Conservative).

When a voter is forced by law to pay a compulsory NI premium in



proportion to his/her earnings, social and financial justice requires that their state pension return be also related to earnings. Not to do so amounts to legalised fraud. A private insurance body would find its directors liable to prison for theft.

If Margaret Thatcher, Harriet Harman and Polly Toynbee want state pensions to continue to be divorced from earnings, they must require that compulsory state premiums be a fixed amount indexed to prices. We voters are in revolt, especially those of us who started work in 1948 and have become desperate after nearly two decades of financial abuse.

OWEN EVANS
Bromyard, Herefordshire

Sir: Polly Toynbee suggests ("Why I should give back my widow's pension", 4 December) that there is no need for the well-off to draw universal benefits – sickness, unemployment, child benefit or pensions.

That means that those benefits would all have to be means-tested. Who would welcome that? When there is such a large disparity between the incomes of the rich and the poor, a better way of giving the Government more money would be to tax the rich more, by making income tax more steeply graduated, as it was years ago. In addition, inheritance tax should be graduated, as capital transfer tax used to be.

I am not suggesting that we should go back to the particular rates of tax in force when the Conservatives came to power in 1979. To aim at a half-way position might be better.

JOHN WYMER
Bridport, Dorset

History backs women riders

Sir: Steve Boggan's report ("Riding roughshod over tradition", 7 December) on Hawick's Common Riding notes that women were allowed to ride until 1932.

If the Common-Riding Committee of Hawick think that they are preserving an all-male tradition, history tells us otherwise. Women were visible in these ceremonial ridings from earlier times. Women who were landowners in their own right or the widows of propertyed men could participate in the annual marking of the town, village or parish boundaries.

It did not matter whether this was a town in the Scottish Borders or a parish in the City of London – boundaries had to be protected against interlopers.

In 1602 the "riding of the community of Innerwick" in East Lothian was led by no less a person than Dame Christian Douglas (Lady Home).

Dr MAUREEN M MEIKLE
Senior Lecturer in History,
University of Sunderland

Sir: Daniel Rosenthal is incorrect in describing Professor Lesley Regan as the first woman in England to hold a Chair in Obstetrics and Gynaecology ("Birth of a prof", 4 December).

This honour was held by Dame Anne L McIlroy, who was appointed to the Chair of

US flying rights an internal issue

Sir: A Virgin Atlantic advertisement in your 4 December edition asserts that the right to fly into Britain and pick up passengers then fly on to Europe, is the same as flying to New York and picking up passengers then flying on to Miami. They are two different issues. The second one is called cabotage and is fought against in the UK as much as in the United States.

Next, Virgin Atlantic would like us to believe that the US is a protectionist government. Nothing could be further from the truth. The US is very liberal to British carriers investing in US airlines, compared to most other countries.

Finally, Virgin would like the flying public to believe that Virgin Atlantic is protecting them from a merger that is somehow anti-competitive, when they practise the same thing with other US airlines. I think that Mr Branson should just stick to the facts.

MATT PAXTON
Vashon, Washington State, USA

Licence fee future

Sir: Your report "Licence fee 'on the way out'" (6 December) reflected a misunderstanding of the replies given to the National Heritage Select Committee by the BBC Chairman, Sir Christopher Bland. It suggested that Sir Christopher accepted the prospect

US flying rights an internal issue

that the licence fee might no longer exist "in as little as five years' time". The Government has guaranteed the licence fee for that long. No one can speak with absolute certainty beyond that, but Sir Christopher made it clear that the licence-fee system of funding the BBC had worked for more than 75 years and he believed there was broad support for it. He went on to say that he had no doubt that if the country and Parliament wanted a licence-fee-funded BBC, even in 20 years' time, we would have it.

It is up to the BBC to make the case for the licence fee through the quality of its programmes and the range of its services, and we will continue to do so. It would be a sad day when Britain gave up the benefit of the services available to all through the universal licence fee.

COLIN BROWNE
Director of Corporate Affairs, BBC
London W1

Welsh lording it

Sir: The lineage of Viscount Cranborne, Leader of the House of Lords ("A Lordly plot to save their place", 4 December), began with his Welsh ancestor when Henry Tudor established himself in 1485 – as Seisyllt, the Welsh-speaking Lord Burghley.

Let us hope that another Welshman, Lord Richard, leader of the Labour Peers, will bring to a close this anachronism of hereditary peers and that the last of the ap Seisyllts to vote in the Lords will have the grace "to accept political defeat cordially" – long overdue in this "classless" society.

DAVID TREFOR DAVIES
Kenilworth, Warwickshire

Farm antibiotics the real danger

Sir: John Gummer hopes to promote banning the import of genetically altered maize ("Ministers face maize breakout", 4 December). One gathers that the maize in question has been made to have greater resistance to the ills that afflict it while growing. I think it is safe to say that maize and farm animals, or humans, have very few diseases in common: on the surface, the likelihood of the resistant qualities of the altered maize would encourage resistance in the gut flora of farm animals or humans seems slim.

If Mr Gummer were really concerned about the possibility of farming practices generating resistant bacteria, he might consider the present use of antibiotics in dairy and stock herds. Dairy cows are given sufficient antibiotics that their residue prevents milk from souring: typical pasteurised British cow's milk will kill an introduced yoghurt culture, unless the milk has been first heated nearly to boiling to destroy the antibiotics it contains.

The likelihood of this practice encouraging the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria which pose a danger to human health is not remote. The antibiotics employed – tetracycline, for example – are in common use in human medicine, and cattle and humans have considerable intestinal flora in common, *E coli* being a prominent example.

C COLEMAN
London WC1

Sir: In your leading article on food scares (4 December), you say that genetic engineering of food should be no more controversial than any other form of scientific research.

Genetic engineering does not have the precision which its name implies. It is not possible to predict the full biochemical consequences of the interactions of a gene from a completely unrelated organism within its new plant host.

Scientists in the biotech industry appear to be ignoring fundamental principles of molecular genetics and the limitations of the technology as they try to meet technical and commercial objectives. In a like frame of mind the Government is assuming safety unless (or until) there is evidence to the contrary, instead of taking the view that something is potentially dangerous unless proved to be safe.

Current voluntary guidelines only require testing for known toxins, ignoring the possibility of the creation of new unexpected substances. At the very least, consumers should be entitled to make an informed judgement and to exercise choice. This necessitates full disclosure labelling.

P H WHILE
Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Kilt-free zone

Sir: In the dialogue about the history of the kilt (Letters, 4 December) none of your correspondents has had anything to say about the custom of those Highlanders too poor to afford a targe removing their phillibors entirely to wrap round their non-sword arm as a substitute, and charging down upon the Redcoats, or any other enemy, stark naked. Perhaps this was one of the earliest examples of the employment of shock troops.

P M LARG
Bampton, Devon

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The day I learnt how to think straight

A method of teaching science to 11- and 12-year-olds is achieving remarkable exam results. Paul Vallely went back to the school laboratory to see if he could finally learn to design a foolproof scientific experiment

Last week I went back to school. To learn to think. I was put in a class of 11-year-olds with a beaker full of tubes varying in width, length and material and told to work out what affected the pitch of the note I could make by blowing across the top of each tube.

"Now I want you to do four tests," said the teacher, Lisa Marsh, at Woolston School in Southampton. "But I'm not going to tell you which four pairs of tubes to test. You decide."

The first thing, of course, was for me and my 30 peers in Year Seven to see who could make the most piercing whistle from the array of short and long, wide and narrow, plastic and glass tubes before us. Next we developed elaborate rituals for dipping the tubes into the disinfectant provided to avoid transmitting germs. Then there was the discovery that if you blew really hard, you could make yourself dizzy.

That accomplished, most of those on my table seemed uncertain of the next move. No sign of Aim, Method and Conclusion here. So, reverting to a well-tried schoolboy technique, I peered across to see what they were doing at the next table.

It was the start of a CASE lesson. Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education was the jargon behind the acronym. Using it in a pilot programme, 4,500 pupils at 17 comprehensives, who were given 30 such lessons during their first two

years at secondary school, achieved a dramatic improvement in GCSE performance. In CASE schools 20 per cent more pupils got Grade C or above in GCSE Science compared to their peers in non-CASE schools. Interestingly the scheme, which teaches pupils to think rather than merely to learn, saw improvements in maths and in English, too. Almost all pupils were thought to have improved their individual performance.

Miss Marsh had written a few pointers on the blackboard, drawn from questioning the class on the previous CASE lesson. Variables, it said. Input – the things we can alter. Outcome – the changes that are produced. Input: width, length and material. Outcome: is the note higher or lower?

On the next table David had begun. He romped through his four tests and concluded that pitch was affected by width. He rushed up to the teacher with his completed worksheet. At the next table Joanne was having difficulty working out which tubes to choose. "Explain to Joanne how you did it, David," the teacher suggested. His explanation only made his classmate more confused.

"Do you understand now?" "I think so," she lied. The teacher brought the class to order. David was asked to explain his answer to the whole class. "Brilliant method, David, but it's the wrong answer (width may affect volume, but not pitch). So let's look at it another

way. How can we go about doing this? We have three variables? Is there a rule we can work out for three variables?"

"You keep two the same and just change one," said Ruth at the back.

"Why?" "Because you can't tell which one you're testing if you change two or more."

We were all sent back to have another try. "Cognitive mechanisms develop with age. It's not just a matter of becoming faster or more full of knowledge; at different times, we think differently," says Dr Philip Adey, director for the Advancement of Thinking at King's College, London, who is one of the team behind the CASE project. After 20 years studying the learning techniques of British schoolchildren, he concluded that by the age of 16 only 30 per cent had left behind concrete thinking and begun to think abstractly. The supposition was that most of them progressed no further in adulthood. "The question was: were they genetically incapable of anything better? Or had they a potential which was undeveloped because their cognitive development had been insufficiently stimulated?"

Dr Adey is a disciple of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and the Russian educationalist Lev Vygotsky. Aware that such hypothesising is regarded with disdain by most Tory education ministers, Adey heads one section of his report on his successful standards-raising approach, "Barney Theories". From Vygotsky he takes the notion that children have a spectrum of half-formed or potential strategies which may be turned into complete thinking skills by co-operating with others. From Piaget he develops an analysis of what are the most effective times to intervene in this learning process.

Piaget concluded that there are five stages of human learning. In the "sensory" stage, babies learn how to modify their reflexes. In the "pre-operational", the child up to the age of seven develops mental imagery, including one-dimensional perceptions such as size and colour. In the "concrete operational" phase (age seven to 12), the beginnings of logic appear, along with classification of ideas, an understanding of time and number and, later, a notion of multiple classifications from which children build concepts from which they can learn to predict the world. Then, in the final "formal" stage – which occurs pretty much as they transfer from junior to senior school – children develop the ability to reason about the hypothetical world outside their direct range of experiences; they understand abstract concepts and their search for solutions becomes systematic.

It is on the borderlines between these phases, Dr Adey

believes, that the greatest opportunities for accelerated development lie.

Back with Year Seven at Woolston School, the bell is about to ring for break and Joseph is still perplexed. He keeps taking tubes up to Miss Marsh and asking, "Will these do to test for length?"

He holds out a tall, thin glass one and a short, fat plastic one. Joseph is a boy after my own heart. My science master once described an experiment as foolproof until I managed to make it explode, whereupon he rejoined that it was only foolproof, not "bloody fool" proof.

Miss Marsh does not try to explain. "No, get two others," she keeps saying. Finally he produces two the same length, and of the same width but of different materials.

"What's that a test for?" she asks.

"Length."

"Are they different lengths?"

"No, the same."

"If they made different notes, would it be because of the length?"

"No."

"Because of the width?"

"No."

"So because of what?"

"Because of the material."

"So what is that a test for?"

"The material."

"Good, now go and find two that will test length."

"Children must construct their own knowledge," argues Dr Adey. "We can provide bits of information and experiences,

but in the end, if it is to register, they have to do it themselves."

The bell goes. Joanne drops her test tubes on the floor and they smash. But Joseph is still at it. This time he produces two which are the same in every respect but for width. Miss Marsh, despite being clearly drained by the demanding CASEload of the last 60 minutes, remains behind, eating into her precious 15-minute coffee break. Ten minutes later he has got it right. A slow smile of understanding and achievement steals across the boy's face. He leaves the classroom beaming.

Dr Adey's notion is that even if comprehension hadn't dawned, the experience would have been good for Joseph. "The lessons involve a lot of talking and they can be inconclusive and end with the kids going out slightly muddled," he admits, "which is why we'd never recommend giving over the whole of the curriculum to this. It's just one lesson every two weeks. But the cognitive conflict when a pupil encounters a problem which cannot be solved by using their existing ways of thinking, is what produces the results." The other key tool is *metacognition* – getting them to think about their only thinking, to deconstruct how they arrived at a conclusion. In CASE that process is more important than the conclusion itself.

Joseph certainly had a brainful of conflict that morning. "Teaching like this is exhaust-

ing," says Lisa Marsh. "But at the end of the day it is working. We can see it. Even if Joseph had left without getting it right, he'd have taken on board some of the process, which would be good for him."

In the classes that follow, the same conflict and metacognition processes are put to work. Oil will get thicker when it is heated, the class pronounce before the start of an experiment which proves the opposite. Then they compare the graph drawn from the results with the one they drew after testing how far a spring stretches as weight is added. At the end the 11-year-olds are groping after an understanding of which variables enable them to predict, and in what way.

The skills they learn take them outside the science lab. After variables CASE finds concrete entrances into the abstract mazes of ratio, proportionality, compensation, equilibrium, correlation and probability.

For the latter they make tea, sometimes putting the milk in first, sometimes after. How many times would someone have to guess correctly before you might suspect they were not guessing, but could tell by taste? Four or five, say most pupils. Then they do the test and compare the results across the class to discover that 20 per cent come out right by mere guesswork. They have begun on probability. It is not too long before they are on to smoking. Just because not everyone who smokes gets lung cancer does not mean that there is no significant statistical relationship between the two, they conclude. Not bad for 11- and 12-year-olds.

Did I learn to think? Not having spent a day in a classroom since I was an inmate of one, I certainly learned a new respect for the abilities of both pupils and teachers. The latent intelligence of the youngsters was impressive, even where they did not immediately seem particularly bright. And the energy, enthusiasm, commitment and dedication of the teachers were awe-inspiring both in class and in their after-hours analysis and preparation.

What I did learn is that when a child asks a question, the hardest thing for an unconstructed adult is to keep his mouth shut and not immediately announce what the answer is. Learning that may have been enough of an achievement. "Crystallised intelligence" – wisdom – stays level on average until the age of 75. But fluid intelligence – the ability to be flexible – seems to peak from the age of 18 to 22. There is a decrease in the ability to form new concepts from the late twenties," says Dr Adey. "Some of us are just past it." Fortunately there is always a generation of youngsters out there who are not, and now there is a cohort of teachers with the skills to develop those children's talents to a greater potential than we previously realised was possible. There is always something like to be learned by going back to school.

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A Yankee in an English country garden



Miles Kingston

Today's quiz question is this: "What is the connection between Jane Austen and baseball?" While you're thinking about that one (and we will get to the answer by and by), I'll tell you the connection between me and baseball. The connection between me and baseball is that my nine-year-old son came home at the weekend from his school Christmas Fair and revealed that he had bought a baseball mitt for 30p on the white elephant stall. Not only that, but he had conceived an intense desire to play baseball. Not in the

future, but right now, at a time when normal fathers have to sit down and write pieces for *The Independent*. He wants me to go out and initiate him into baseball.

"Not right now," I told him. "I can't play baseball with you right now because I am busy and also because I haven't the faintest idea how to play baseball..."

And I nearly added, because baseball is such a minority taste that it hasn't even made it on to Channel 4. (At American insistence it has made it into the Olympics, but this slightly backfired because the American Olympic baseball team keeps getting beaten by the Japanese and Cubans.)

The extraordinary thing is that my son should know anything about baseball at all. He has never seen it played in his life. If he wanted to see a game of baseball, where would he go? I believe I have seen it played by expat Americans in Hyde Park, but where is the nearest place where it is played seriously? You would have to cross an ocean, would you not?

No, the reason he knows about baseball is that it slips and slides into our

consciousness through American films and cartoons. Baseball is part of America, therefore it is part of our culture, and it does not seem odd for American films with a baseball theme to be released in Britain or anywhere where baseball is not played. There seems to be a new film every six months about a junior league team that has never won a match and suddenly gets a new manager or about a team which is on the slide and suddenly gets a new manager or about a guy who has a vision of building a baseball stadium or...

Baseball runs through Hollywood. The game runs through American cartoon strips. I learnt most of what I know about baseball from reading Peanuts. It permeates American expatriate culture. Every year in the *International Herald Tribune*, at the start of the US baseball season, they print the same poem called "The Crack of a Bat", which is a lament written by an American living in Europe at being out of the old country just when baseball is starting up again.

And now my son has got a baseball mitt, just like those American kids in American films. Next thing, he will be wearing a baseball cap backwards. Where have I gone wrong?

Mark you, I have seen a couple of baseball games myself, and I thought they were wonderful, a lot better than any American football. This was way back in 1960, when I worked for a few months in New York, in the vacuum between school and university. One day I got the train uptown somewhere to Yankee Stadium and sat for a day in the bleachers eating hot dogs and watching men in long white uniforms hit, throw and run. There were one or two men playing who were legends coming to the end of their golden days. Mickey Mantle I saw, and Yogi Berra. They didn't do much, but I saw them.

(I also sat behind a black couple who fascinated me, not just because I had never seen ordinary black people before, but because the man was so absorbed in the game that he never noticed that his girlfriend, bored out of her mind, had started flirting with the lone black guy

sitting next to her on the other side. I went back again for another game two weeks later, and the girl was there again, not with her boyfriend this time, but with the lone black guy! I have to say, she was looking a little bored with him too by this time.)

Well, I am afraid I have to leave it there. I have to go and play baseball with my son until he gets bored with it. After all, I suppose it isn't quite such an un-English activity as all that. It is part of our dear old heritage. Jane Austen herself knew all about baseball. Turn to page 3 of *Northanger Abbey* and you will find:

"Mrs Morland's elder daughters were inevitably left to shift for themselves. And it was not very wonderful that Catherine, who had by nature nothing heroic about her, should prefer cricket, baseball, riding on horseback, and running about the country, at the age of fourteen, to books..."

STOP PRESS: Baseball has been cancelled. He has just found last summer's cricket stumps in the icy edge of the lawn and we are going to play cricket instead, as the dark falls and the frost returns.

obituaries / gazette

Richard Clarkson

Richard Clarkson was one of Britain's outstanding aeronautical engineers and made a leading contribution to British technical air supremacy in the Second World War.

He was responsible for the aerodynamics of the war's most efficient bomber, the de Havilland Mosquito, which could carry the same bomb load to Berlin as a Boeing Flying Fortress using half the power and a fifth of the crew. The Mosquito was so fast it could make two round trips in a night to the German capital, and outrun Goering's Messerschmitts. Nearly 8,000 were built in 40 versions.

Late in 1939 Clarkson had been sent by Sir Geoffrey de Havilland to Salisbury Hall, a secluded Elizabethan manor near St Albans, as a member of a small design team whose secret task, under their chief designer R.E. Bishop, was to realise de Havilland's revolutionary idea for a very fast, light, unarmed bomber.

Before the war Clarkson had worked on the advanced DH88 racer and the streamlined Albion and Flamingo fighters, pursuing what his boss and mentor Charles Walker called "economic efficiency through aerodynamic purity". He now applied this philosophy to a war machine. The result was the Mosquito.

After the war Clarkson was responsible for the aerodynamics and performance of the Comet, the world's first jet air-

liner. Though marred in its early years by structural failures, the Comet's aerodynamics and jet power made history by doubling the cruising speeds and altitudes of contemporary airliners.

Clarkson and his team, nearly all in their twenties, had to solve airworthiness problems quite new in commercial aviation - sonic compressibility, shock wave drag, jet intakes, fully powered flying controls without manual reversion, and speed brakes. All these are commonplace in the 11,000 jetliners flying today, but the Comet was first.

The Comet 4, still the sleekest of jetliners, gave 20 years of safe passenger service and made history by winning the race with Boeing to operate the first transatlantic jet service (4 October 1958).

The prototype Mosquito, W4050, flew in November 1940, within a year of the first weight and drag estimates (W4050 has miraculously survived and may still be seen at Salisbury Hall). Clarkson had calculated that the Mosquito would attain 376mph. It actually achieved 386mph - faster than the Spitfire.

In his privately circulated *Recollections* (1990) Clarkson recalled the Ministry's scepticism: "It cannot be faster than the Spitfire." W4050 was summoned to Boscombe Down, the government aircraft experimental establishment, for a

check by the test pilot Allen Wheeler. Fred Rowarth, Boscombe's chief technical officer, analysed the results. "We waited anxiously outside his office door," recalled Clarkson. "Finally he emerged and raised his hat, saying, 'I take off my hat to 387mph.'"

At the party afterwards in the George Hotel, Ambsbury, a merry streak was performed by the test pilot Geoffrey de Havilland Jr.

Other famous de Havilland aircraft benefited from Clarkson's responsibility for the aerodynamics, performance, stability, aero-elasticity and flight-testing. These included the DH100 Vampire, the world's first mass-produced single-jet fighter (over 4,000 built); the world's fastest piston fighter, the 464mph DH103 Hornet, renowned for its good looks and handling; and the swept wing tailless DH103, the first European jet to exceed the speed of sound (6 September 1948).

Clarkson was also responsible for the aerodynamics of the world's fastest jetliner, the 600mph DH121 Trident. Boeing made an almost identical aerodynamic copy, the 727. The Trident was the world's first airliner to land itself automatically in thick fog carrying air-paying passengers. The remarkable British achievement (of November 1966) pioneered "systems integration", the marriage of aerodynamics with electronics, commonplace today. Clarkson was a pioneer of computer-aided design, also now routine, with the 1955 Ferranti Pegasus system.

Trident experience helped Clarkson's team to design the wing of Europe's Airbus. The British government had pulled out of the European air consortium, angering the French and Germans and leaving the British on a politically very sloped playing field. Clarkson's team won the wing competition on technical merit with "supercritical" aerolift sections combining unequalled efficiency in high subsonic cruise with good low speed lift. The

French technical director of Airbus, Bernard Ziegler, called it "our beautiful English wing". British Aerospace has made 1,500 of them to date, its most profitable civil business. Recently BAE won the competition to design the wing of the Airbus FLA military airlifter.

Clarkson also influenced the design of 125/Hawker corporate jet, for which he won a Royal Society gold medal, and also the 146/Avro regional jet. BAE's Chester factory has built 900 125/Hawkers, a British civil jet record, and has recently won a Raytheon contract to build 125/Hawker airframes into the next century. Customers include the Japanese Air Force. The 70-100 seat BAE146/Avro also has the "Clarkson touch", achieving brisk runway performance without slats or thrust reversers.

Nimrod, the RAF's maritime reconnaissance aircraft, owes its existence to Clarkson. He had proposed a Comet 4 variant to replace the venerable Shackleton, but head office (then Hawker Siddeley) preferred a Trident development. When the Ministry turned this down as too costly, and threatened to buy the French Atlantique, Clarkson got a phone call from head office: "Put your Comet MK study on a car to St James's Square at once."

The RAF ordered it and has operated Nimrod for nearly 30 years. Recently the MoD ordered British Aerospace to build 25 more, updated as Nimrod 2000s. Clarkson's Comet platform will fly for perhaps another 50 years.

Born in 1904, Richard Clarkson was educated at Claysmore School (whose choir sung at the Sherborne Abbey memorial service). He took his BSc and ACGI at City and Guilds, which made him one of its rare Fellows.

He was apprenticed to the de Havilland Aircraft Company at Stag Lane, Edgware, in 1925, and gained his pilot's licence in the heroic era of the de Havilland Moths. He met the pioneer pilots and flew the company



Clarkson (third from left), Charles Walker, Sir Geoffrey de Havilland and R.E. Bishop, with a model of the DH88 Mosquito, c.1941

Hornet Moth on business. He also flew as flight test observer in many new DH aircraft including the DH65 Hornet, in which he found himself at 24,000ft without oxygen standing up in an open cockpit trying to read the pilot's instruments.

Clarkson became a remarkable selector and leader of technical staff. Last May, in a video about the birth of jet transport commissioned by the Seattle Museum of Flight, he said of his staff: "They were all brilliant. It is entirely thanks to them that we are in Airbus." Though he could be a hard taskmaster, his staff revered him and kept in touch, visiting him and his wife in their Dorset mill house where he spent nearly 30 years of happy retirement. To celebrate his 90th birthday

they arranged a DH90 flypast. When last year's gales lifted his garden bench and flung it upside down on the lawn, he was typically curious to discover what freak force could pluck such a heavy object from against a wall and throw it into wind. He showed his visitors his graphs and tables of wind velocities, vortex pressures and stagnation points proving that even a garden bench can fly.

Showing an old colleague round his garden earlier this summer, Clarkson demonstrated his renowned love of Shakespeare. The visitor had commented that his rooks sounded like a scene from *Macbeth*. Clarkson declared in the raspy voice well known to erring staff: "Light thickens, and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood". He

would invoke Shakespeare often. Hearing of a management reshuffle, he intoned: "Thus is the eagle mewed, while kites and buzzards prey at liberty."

Clarkson loved Wagner, above all *Parsifal*. After a cataract operation last April he signed his letters Wotan. Like his technical reports, his letters were in immaculate English. He used the backs of wastepaper despatched in old envelopes sealed with "Preserve the Rain Forests" or "Don't Let Europe Rule" stickers. He engaged in hunting, ballooning and the Campaign for an Independent Britain.

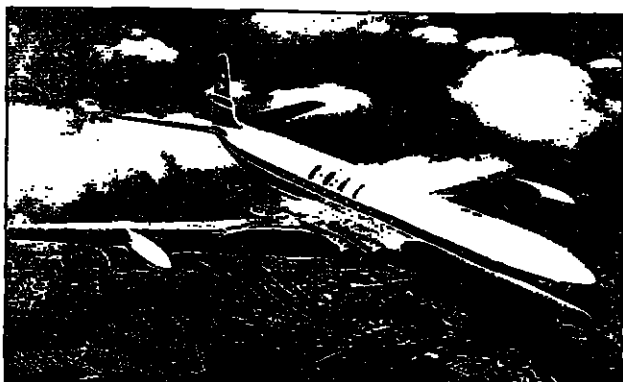
He was indefatigable in helping the anti-slavery campaigner Margaret Cave to achieve proper recognition for his ancestor Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846). His last engage-

ment was on 26 September when, though unwell, he attended the dedication in Westminster Abbey of a memorial to Clarkson, "the friend of slaves". As senior living descendant he posed for photographs with the present Lord Wiltshire. Three years ago he opened the Clarkson anti-slavery museum in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

Richard Clarkson was a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, which awarded him its British Gold Medal in 1966 for "outstanding contributions to aircraft design".

J. M. Ramsden

Richard Milroy Clarkson, aeronautical engineer; born London 14 July 1904; OBE 1950; married 1940 Sylvia Paice (one daughter); died Exon, Somerset 7 October 1996.



The sleekest jetliner ever? The Clarkson-designed de Havilland Comet 4

John Vassall

John Vassall was blackmailed by the KGB because of his homosexuality, and obliged to spy for them for seven years from the mid-1950s while working as a comparatively junior civil servant in the Admiralty.

His lowly clerical grade did not mean he was denied access to innumerable secret documents. In Moscow, where he was posted aged 29 and entrapped with contemptuous ease by the KGB within months, he made an excellent impression on his superiors. Their reports commended the young man's "first-class appearance and manners", his unruffled composure, readiness to please and exemplary moral standards.

In the wake of the notorious Foreign Office spies Burgess and MacLean, who had defected to Moscow in 1951, much was made of ever more rigorous vetting procedures designed to appease American fury over British security laxity. Homosexual behaviour was still a criminal offence in the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. This meant that sexual entrapment along precisely the lines experienced by Vassall was such a danger that anyone vulnerable should have been denied sensitive access.

After Vassall's arrest in 1962 it became apparent yet again that the KGB were far more adept at spotting vulnerable individuals than were the Foreign Office personnel department. It also emerged that Vassall's selection for Moscow, of all places, had been in part an economy measure. Traditionally, his job

had been performed by a married man, but to avoid allowances for couples they had posted a bachelor instead.

His treachery had been rewarded with plenty of cash after initial threats to send his mother photographs of her son enjoying a homosexual orgy. Vassall spent lavishly on clothes and frequent holidays at a time when only the rich could afford to follow the sun. The rent of his Dolphin Square flat alone was not far off his entire income after tax.

These facts proved damaging to the Macmillan government, which was already under pressure after another naval specialist, George Blake, had been sentenced to a record 42-year sentence for spying. Vassall's own trial by Lord Parker, the Chief Justice, was almost entirely in camera, yet the press, despite ferocious denials from official sources, uncovered a hapless saga of incompetence, extravagance combined with foolish penny-pinching, and sexual corruption. After Vassall, and even more when the Profumo-Keeler scandal broke in 1963, Macmillan's premiership was dogged by a sleaze factor.

These political reverberations lent significance to an intrinsically sad story. Born in St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, where his father was a long-serving chaplain, Vassall developed a boyhood taste for religious piety in the twin churches of St Bartholomew in West Smithfield. At school in Monmouth he discovered his homosexuality and was disappointed in an ambition to en-

ter Keble College, Oxford.

Instead, he joined the RAF in the ranks, where ironically he received the photographic training that made him so competent a spy. A state-of-the-art Praxina document-copying camera was found expertly concealed in 807 Hood House, his Dolphin Square address, when section DI of the security services stripped the place.

After wartime service with the RAF in 1948 Vassall joined the Admiralty. While in Moscow he had printed a special card reading "Junior Military Attaché", and had even been rebuffed for turning up at social occasions thought to be too elevated for his grade. Back in London (from 1957), he used his spy-master's cash to cut something of a swathe in the underground world of homosexuality. His sartorial role model was the Hon Thomas Galbraith, the junior Admiralty minister he served as personal secretary before moving to military intelligence. He kept a silver-framed photograph of his boss in naval uniform on his desk.

In retirement, Vassall's father had become an ex officio curate at St James's, Piccadilly and his son made some play of his connection with this then fashionable establishment.

He liked to impress friends with connections in high places and often cited Lord Poppington, a character in Vanbrugh's play *The Relapse*, to the effect that this was the sole occasion in London with a congregation compiled entirely of gentlemen. He was also wont to repeat compliments he said he had re-



Vassall: "first-class appearance and manners" reported the KGB

ceived for his "bedroom-eyes". The importance of his espionage disclosures were never revealed. The tribunal set up under Lord Radcliffe established that there had been no impropriety in his relationship with Galbraith who, though he felt obliged to resign, later received a more senior government job. The main victims of Radcliffe were the press, two of whom served jail sentences for refusing to name sources.

Having converted to Catholicism, Vassall proved a model and increasingly religious prisoner, whose spiritual life was enriched by visits from Lord Longford. Released after serving ten years, he claimed in his autobiography that he was "a pygmy of a spy" in comparison with the atom physicist Klaus Fuchs. Nonetheless, Fuchs's

sentence (14 years) had been four years shorter than his own. Vassall was certainly the smallest of beer compared with the Cambridge Five: Burgess, MacLean, Philby, Blunt and Cairncross. Unlike them he had scant ideological regard for Communism. He had operated entirely under threat of blackmail and also for greed.

Victim of historical circumstance as much as anything, he might in another age have found a vocation as a gay cleric. As it was he changed his name to John Phillips and spent his declining years in total anonymity and obscurity at St John's Wood, north London.

David Leitch

William John Vassall, spy; born London 20 September 1924; died London 18 November 1996.

Pete Rozelle

Pete Rozelle was, quite simply, the best commissioner ever to serve a major US sport. For almost three decades he ran America's National Football League.

When he took over in 1960, as a little known fallback choice of the league's owners after 23 rounds of voting, professional football was chickenfeed - an uninspiring hotchpotch cluster of local teams, local markets and purely local enthusiasms. By the time he retired, the NFL had outstripped major league baseball to become a national institution, the country's richest, best run and most widely followed sport.

In a business dominated by short-term greed rather than long-term vision, Pete Rozelle was the exception. From the outset he understood three things: the vast possibilities of television for the sport, the need for financial equality between clubs and that, to ensure the credibility of the product, no star could be bigger than the game.

Rozelle began his NFL career in 1952, when he joined the Los Angeles Rams as their public relations director. Five years later he became their general manager, and it was from this position that he took over the NFL.

The NFL Rozelle inherited at the age of 33 consisted of just 12 teams, with hugely varying resources. Back in 1960, the New York Giants could sell their television rights for \$350,000 a year, but the Green Bay Packers from remote northern Wisconsin could command

only a tenth of that. Displaying the gift for compromise that would be a hallmark of his tenure, Rozelle persuaded the owners not only to allow him to negotiate a single television deal for the entire league - but to share the proceeds equally.

This was born the concept of revenue sharing that today generates \$40 million of television income for each of the NFL's 30 teams. Two years ago, baseball was paralysed by the longest ever strike in sports history over the very same issue, which to a lesser extent torments ice-hockey and basketball.

The NFL has had its share of turmoil over the years, including three strikes by unionised players and countless spats over franchises: in what other sport would the shift of a team from Cleveland to Baltimore require round-the-clock police protection and be a subject of debate in Congress? But revenue sharing is an accepted article of faith. And the \$1.6 billion four-year deal in 1993 with Fox television is the measure of the NFL's unrivalled popularity.

Finally, Rozelle insisted on a clean house. Back in 1963 he banned two of the sport's top stars, Alex Karras and Paul Hornung, for gambling, and despite several well-advertised drug scandals, football is still strictly run today. That incidentally was the year of what the commissioner acknowledged as his "great mistake", permitting play on 24 November, two days after the assassination of President Kennedy.

But that controversy has long

since settled. Pete Rozelle's lasting legacy is the changed habits of his fellow countrymen. In 1970 he merged the NFL with the rival American Football League - but not before instigating a regular season finale game between their respective champions. Later it would be called the Super Bowl, the single biggest event on America's sporting calendar, bigger than hockey's Stanley Cup or the NBA basketball championship, bigger even than the World Series.

But even the ordinary NFL season has transformed American weekends. For three hours each Sunday afternoon in winter the streets of major cities are eerily deserted because of televised football. To the mix Rozelle then added that other institution of Monday Night football, bringing the sport into tens of millions of homes in mid-week prime time, and forcing cinemas and bowling alleys to shut down in droves while the game was on.

Even Thanksgiving has been reshaped by the NFL. A televised afternoon game is as much a part of America's great family holiday as turkey, pumpkin pie and a visit from the grandparents. Few Presidents can claim as much.

Rupert Cornwell

Alvin Ray (Pete) Rozelle, sports executive; born 1 March 1926; General Manager, Los Angeles Rams football club, 1957-60; Commissioner, National Football League 1960-89; died Rancho Santa Fe, California 6 December 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

CLAVI Margery Jean Hogarth, died on 30 November aged 89. Much loved by family and friends, former inspiring teacher at North London Collegiate School. Requiem Mass on Friday 13 December at 2.15 at St Albans. Monmouth Avenue, Burnt Oak. Donations in memory to Oxfam or Amnesty. Enquiries to N.H. Putnam, 0181-205 6200.

IN MEMORIAM

PETER John Andrew, 17/24/5/12/89. A dear man, who loved and lived life to the full. Loving you and missing you today and every day. Mary.

FOR GAZETTE BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, please telephone 0171-293 2011 or fax to 0171-293 2916.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Prince of Wales, President, attends a lecture at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, Whitehall, London SW1.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment presents the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Marriages

Mr T. R. S. Cole and Miss C. Powell
The marriage took place on Saturday 7 December, at Chelsea Register Office, London SW3, between Mr Toby Cole and Miss Georgia Powell.

Births

Miss John Armatradine, singer, 46; Sir Nicholas Bonser MP, 54; Mr Billy Bremner, former football captain, 54; Mr Beau Bridges, film actor, 55; Sir Stanley Brown, former chairman, CEBG, 86; Miss Susan Bullock, soprano, 38; Sir John Burch, former president, Trinity College, Oxford, 71; Dame Judi Dench, actress, 62; Mr Kirk Douglas, film actor, 80; Mr Doug Fairbanks Jr, film actor, 87; Miss Dawn Freedman, circuit judge, 54; Mr Benny Green, musician, writer and broadcaster, 69; Mr Geoffrey Hanks, former chairman, Finch Lovell, 70; Mr Robert Hawke, former prime minister of Australia, 67; Professor Gabriel Horn, master, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 69; Dr Lionel Kopelowitz, former president, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 70; Mr Ian McIntyre, writer and broadcaster, 65; Sir Michael Mann, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, 66; Mr Donny Osmond, singer, 39; Miss Isobel Poole,

Sheriff of the Lothian and Borders, 55; Lord Ross QC, former MP and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 70; Mr David Rider, disc jockey, 56; Dame Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, operatic soprano, 81; Sir Peter Smithers, former MP, 83; Miss Rita Stephen, trade union leader, 71; Miss Joanna Trollope, author, 53.

Anniversaries

Births: John Milton, poet, 1608; Baldassare Perri, castrato, 1610; Johann Joachim Winckelmann, art historian, 1717; Karl Wilhelm Scheele, chemist, 1742; George Grosz, artist, actor in Gilbert and Sullivan roles, 1847; Jos Charles Hanks, author and creator of "Uncle Remus", 1848; Clarence Birdseye, inventor of deep freezing process, 1886; Hermione Ferdinanda Gingold, actress and entertainer, 1898; Richard Austen Butler, Baron, statesman, 1902.

Deaths: Malcolm IV, King of Scotland, 1163; Sir Anthony Van Dyck, painter, 1641; Edward Hyde, First Earl of Clarendon, statesman and historian, 1674; Robert Nanteuil, engraver, 1678; Joseph Bramah, locksmith and inventor of the hydraulic printing press, 1814; Ezra Cornell, financier and founder of Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1874; Dame Edith Sitwell, author and poet, 1964; Karl Barth, theologian, 1968; Ralph Johnson Bunche, diplomat, 1971. On

this date the first execution took place in Newgate Prison, London, 1783; the Spanish army was defeated at the Battle of Ayacucho, Peru, and agreed to leave South America, 1824; in France, a law was passed separating Church from State, 1905; Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* was performed for the first time, Dresden, 1905; an Arab rising in Palestine was violently put down by the Ottoman army, 1910; during World War I, Jerusalem (held by the Turks) surrendered to the General Allenby, 1917; the Eighth Army opened its offensive in North Africa by attacking Sidi Barrani, 1940; in Yugoslavia, Josip Tito formed his own government, 1943; the republic of Indonesia was established, 1949; the first episode of *Coronation Street* was televised, 1960; Tanganyika became independent, 1961, and a republic in 1962; Lech Walesa was elected president of Poland, 1990. Today is the Feast Day of St Budoc or Beuzec, St Gorgonia, St Leocadia, St Peter Founder and The Seven Martyrs of Samosata.

Lectures

University College London: Dr Tom Wilkie, "Genes 'R' Us? - public policy issues in the new genetics", 4.30pm.
National Gallery: Philip Conisbee, "Georges de La Tour", 1pm.

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Bail
R v Liverpool City Magistrates Court, ex p Santos; QB Div Ct (Stoughton LJ, Tucker J) 15 Nov 1996.

Where a defendant failed to attend court on the date fixed for him to surrender to bail because his solicitor miscalculated the date, justices had to determine whether, in all the circumstances, the solicitor's mistake was a reasonable excuse for failure to attend, before exercising their discretion to institute proceedings under s 6(1) of the Bail Act 1976.

Benefits
Alcock v DPP; QB Div Ct (Stoughton LJ, Tucker J) 14 Nov 1996.

An appellant, whose partner was the signed claimant for their income support, could not argue that she was unable to comply with her legal obligation

CASE SUMMARIES

9 December 1996

to pay outstanding financial penalties out of her income support because her partner refused to let her use it for that purpose, since the income support received by the appellant's partner was for both of them and the appellant was entitled to a share in that money to pay off her fines.

Richard Burton (Marshall Ferriman & Cheale, Worthing) for the appellant.

Drugs
Re Agluk; QB Div Ct (Schiemann LJ, Butlerfield J) 20 Nov 1996.

The mere failure to include a copy of the Italian schedules specifying that heroin was a prohibited drug, while it might justify the Home Secretary in not proceeding further with an extradition request until such copy was furnished pursuant to a request for supplementary information, did not necessarily inhibit the magistrate from being satisfied that the authority to proceed related to an ex-

tradition crime. The magistrate might, by relying on a sworn statement for example, be satisfied that heroin was listed in the schedules.

Malcolm Fortune (Robin F Clark & Co, Greenwich) for the applicant; John Hardy (CPS) for the Italian government and governor of British Prison.

Road traffic
Swan v Vehicle Inspectorate; QB Div Ct (Schiemann LJ, Butlerfield J) 11 Nov 1996.

Time for laying informations ran from the date the person responsible for prosecuting became aware of the offence, not from when the investigating officer received an admission of guilt, since a person authorised to investigate whether an offence had been committed was not a prosecutor for the purposes of s 6(1) of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988. The fact that the appellant thought he was entitled to conclude that the offi-

cer had such authority made no difference.

John Gibson (Lester Dixon & Jeffcoat, Nuneaton) for the appellant; Patrick Sadd (Hammer Bell & Co, Worcester) for the respondent.

Tenancy

Essex AB & anr v Pearl Assurance plc; CA (Stuart-Smith, Morritt LJ, Sir John May) 8 Nov 1996.

Where during the course of a fixed term lease a tenant of an office building ceased to occupy it for the purpose of his business, Pt II of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 ceased to apply, thus causing the tenancy to expire on the contractual term date with no need for the tenant to serve a notice under s 27 of that Act or otherwise. The contrary decision in *Langauge Securities Ltd v Electro Acoustic Industries Ltd* [1990] 1 EGLR 91 (CA) was not to be followed, being inconsistent with earlier decisions (not cited in that case) of equal authority.

Paul Morgan QC (Geoffrey Delam, Peterborough) for the tenant; Jonathan Brock (Theodore Ordard) for the landlord.

Why the stock market could eventually be driven to perform the splits

Could the stock market split into an array of stand-alone share markets?

Such thoughts, which have been floating around the City since Big Bang annihilated eyeball to eyeball trading 10 years ago, have been given new impetus by Brian Winterflood, the largest market-maker in small company shares.

In an interview in the latest edition of *Smaller Companies Review* he warns that if he finds he cannot compete under the order-driven trading system the Stock Exchange is introducing "we might declare UDI and set up our own stock exchange. That is not a bluff but it is something I would not like to have to do."

Any break-away might not be confined to the smaller stock market. Some of the large investment houses, unhappy with what they see as lack of direction from the Stock Exchange Tower, have talked

about splitting from the traditional Stock Exchange share market and launching their own versions.

Mr Winterflood's SCR comments coincided with new worries that the world could face another share melt-down. On Friday tears of a crash erupted with frightening force.

He warned that in an order-driven system trading in the shares of smaller companies could be impossible in a bear market.

Only the top 350 companies enjoy sufficient trading volume to justify order-driven, as opposed to the present price-driven, trading, he believes. In a bear market there would, he warns, be only sellers in the small company sector.

"It would then become very difficult for fund managers to get a value on their portfolios. Effectively the shares would go unquoted while the bear market raged."

It is, of course, often difficult to trade in shares of smaller companies, even in a bull market. With trading infrequent there is also a natural tendency for market-makers to shelter behind wide spreads.

So the middle market price is often far removed from the dealing level.

Mr Winterflood, head of Winterflood Securities which deals in the shares of nearly 1,500 companies, thinks London's stock market should split three ways.

The top level would, in effect, be a wholesale market traded internationally by large financial institutions. There would be a different set of regulations for the second level market which would embrace the full list of quoted shares with rules to allow price-driven trading in the smaller and medium sized companies. The third market already exists in the shape of AIM.

The wholesale market would



STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

soak up all the big business: "We think it foolish to go on pretending that retail holders of stocks and shares can get the same price as the wholesalers."

One market-maker has already decided to go it alone. John Jenkins stepped in when the Stock Exchange, surprisingly, decided to do away with the old matched bargain 4.2 market.

He launched Oxf, which now features approaching 150 shares, ranging from old 4.2 stocks like Weetabix to intriguing start-up ventures such as Motion Media. Tradeport, an order-driven system, has also emerged as, at the moment, a flea-bite rival to the main market.

It has to be hoped that the needs of small investors will be given priority as the new-style trading is thrashed out. Many feel the Government and the Stock Exchange authorities have failed to look after the interests of the small shareholder, caring in to the demands of the big investment house; and fund managers.

Crest, the computerised share settlement system which has suffered such a painful birth, is the latest influence which seems to disadvantage the small man.

This week's results get little support from the big battalions. Biggest reporting is Greenalls, the former brewer which en-

joyed a brief membership of Footsie.

Now a hotel, pub and wholesaling operation Greenalls had the sense to give up brewing as the impact of the Government's controversial Beer Orders became apparent. It has, therefore, been able to extend its pub estate without worrying about the retail ceiling formula Whitehall imposed on the big brewers.

On Friday the company at last managed to check out of US hotels. It has sought for years to unload its modest transatlantic chain which, it felt, did not fit in with its operations. The six properties were sold for £14m. As NatWest Securities observes, the disposal represents "a long overdue exit from a business which has rarely been in profit over the past 10 years."

NatWest sees profits emerging 45 per cent higher at £145.5m with the dividend up, perhaps, 8 per cent to 15.3p.

Compass, the expansion hungry contract caterer, could top £115m (£73.2m last time). With around 75 per cent of its profits coming from overseas the recent strength of sterling could be creating a few problems.

Yorkshire Electricity could be called the one that got away - at least for the time being. To many old-fashioned punters it must seem incredible that the group is still independent and able and ready to produce its own profit figures.

At one time it experienced a veritable crescendo of takeover speculation; yet the long-signalled bid failed to appear and indeed Yorkshire says it never received a hint of a solitary approach. Its first-half profits will be sharply down - from £110.6m to nearer £86m.

But the market will be more interested in any moves to return cash to shareholders. A share buy-back - or special dividend - must be likely.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price-earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: Ex rights & Ex dividend & Ex a United Securities Market's Suspended & Partly Paid pm NI Paid Shares, 4 AM Stock

Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

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Calls cost 50p per minute (day time), and 45p at all other times. Call charges include VAT.

Interest Rates

UK 600% Germany 2.5% Japan 0.50%

France 4.50% Belgium 3.50%

Canada 4.75% Spain 3.50%

Italy 7.50% Hong Kong 4.75%

Netherlands 2.50% Denmark 4.50%

Sweden 4.50% Norway 4.50%

Switzerland 3.50% Australia 4.50%

New Zealand 4.50%

South Africa 4.50%

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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Utilities fear £5bn bill after call to return pension cash

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The chief executive of one of the privatised regional electricity companies has warned that a landmark ruling by the pensions ombudsman, which called for electricity employers to hand back surplus cash removed from their pension schemes, could have as big an impact as Labour's planned windfall tax.

It emerged last week that Dr Julian Farrand, the Ombudsman, had provisionally told National Grid to return almost

£44m it removed from the Electricity Supply Pension Scheme, the umbrella body for schemes run by all the privatised firms including power generators. The cash represented about 70 per cent of a surplus identified after a valuation of the Grid's portion of the scheme by actuaries in 1992. Dr Farrand said the Grid had misused the surplus because the rules of the scheme blocked such payments to the employer.

Other electricity companies have since been anxiously taking legal advice on the judg-

ment, which could mean their having to hand back up to £1bn. This could raise serious questions for CalEnergy. The US group is bidding £782m for Northern, which is thought to have taken a substantial portion of the £83m surplus arising at the last two valuations of the company's pension fund. Any repayments would hit the net worth of Northern.

Surpluses of some £500m were removed by electricity employers after the 1992 valuation, including £176m thought to have been used by National

Power to fund early retirement benefits for staff.

Another valuation in 1995 identified a further surplus of about £650m, of which the majority is also thought to have been taken by the employers. Peter Woods, the solicitor from Stephens, Innocent who represented the Grid pensioners, was convinced the ruling would also apply to last year's valuation. "The rules of the scheme haven't altered at all between 1992 and 1995, so the Ombudsman's judgment has to have the same impact in both

cases. There's no question about it."

One regional electricity company, which did not want to be identified before the Ombudsman gave his final warning early in the new year, predicted the judgment would cause turmoil in the industry.

The company's chief executive said: "This ruling is nonsense. It's the employers who have to make up any shortfalls in pension funds so it's only right that employers also get the bulk of any surpluses."

He said the only way to re-

turn the cash would be for electricity companies to take on huge amounts of extra debt. The impact would be similar to Labour's windfall tax on the privatised utilities, which is widely expected to raise up to £5bn.

The company also warned that the industry would have to slash redundancy payments to staff in the future. He explained: "The surpluses help the RECs to make generous redundancy pay-offs, generally of the order of two years' salary. This was the only way we could cut thousands of staff as quickly

as we did. There's just no way we could continue with that if we couldn't use the surpluses."

National Grid has until 17 January to respond to the Ombudsman, but unless it can come up with new arguments his final ruling is likely to back up the provisional judgment. The Grid would then be certain to take the issue to the High Court, in an attempt to protect its shareholders.

The sharing of pension fund surpluses always lead to complex negotiations with pension scheme trustees. Final salary

schemes make a promise of a pension directly related to an employee's earnings, usually measured in the last three years before retirement, and this means the fund is at risk of having to find a lot of money from somewhere if investment performance is not up to scratch.

Separately, Labour claimed yesterday that a Commons reply that gas, water and electricity bills had risen 13 per cent in real terms since 1979, and 3 per cent since the completion of privatisation in 1990.

BA abandons plans to buy super-jumbo

Michael Harrison
Seattle

British Airways has shelved plans to be a launch customer for the 747-600X, the super-jumbo jet that Boeing hopes will maintain its lead over the rival European aircraft manufacturer Airbus Industrie.

The move is a blow to the US planemaker which was counting on BA to back the \$7bn (£4bn) development programme by placing an early order for the proposed family of 450-550 seater jets. The launch of the 747-500X/600X range is four months behind schedule.

Even if the go-ahead is given in the next six months the jets, which will cost \$200m each and carry 30 per cent more passengers than a conventional jumbo, will not be in service until 2001 at the earliest.

BA's withdrawal is the latest complication for the super-jumbo programme. It has also been affected by uncertainties over what engines will power it and plans by Airbus to launch its own 600-800 seat double-decker aircraft, the A3XX.

Ron Woodard, president of the Boeing Commercial Air-

craft Group, said: "The odds of launching this programme are a little better than 50-50 but it is not a slam dunk. We will be betting the company on this project and we have a tough business case to prove."

Although BA is still part of the airline working group advising Boeing on the project, it is not now thought to be actively negotiating an order. BA is instead concentrating on other priorities - the merger of transatlantic services with American Airlines and its goal of saving an extra £1bn by the end of the decade by turning itself into a "virtual airline".

So far only two long-haul carriers - Thai Airways and Malaysian Airlines - have said they intend to buy the new Boeing aircraft. Thai and Malaysian have indicated they would purchase 12 jets but Boeing needs more orders from a bigger number of airlines to launch the programme.

John Roundhill, director of engineering on the programme, said Boeing was talking seriously to half-a-dozen airlines about the stretched 747. Other carriers who would be interested include Cathay Pacific, Qantas, Lufthansa, Air France and North West. But BA is the big prize.

"We know they have other things on their mind but it is very important to have BA as a launch customer," said Mr Roundhill.

Boeing and Airbus meanwhile continue their cat and mouse game over the development of their rival super-jumbo programmes.

Mr Woodard said Boeing estimated the market for 500-plus seater aircraft at only 470 over the next 20 years and claimed that the Airbus A3XX could cost \$18bn-\$20bn to develop. Airbus puts the market at 1,380

aircraft and says development costs would be \$8bn-\$12bn. Boeing announced a deal last week to collaborate on the engineering design and analysis of the 747-500X/600X with its US rival, McDonnell Douglas.

Not to be outdone, Airbus has brought Alenia of Italy on board to help develop the A3XX.

The Italian company will have a 10 per cent stake in the A3XX but will not, at present, take a direct shareholding in Airbus alongside the existing partners, British Aerospace, Aerospatiale of France, Daimler Benz of Germany and Casa of Spain.

Mr Woodard said there were "no plans or even dreams" to develop the collaboration with McDonnell Douglas into a merger of the two respective commercial aircraft businesses. He also said that the Alenia-Airbus tie-up would not change Boeing's relationship with the Italian company which is a long-standing supplier to Boeing which estimates that the total market for new aircraft will be 16,000 jets worth \$1,000bn over the next 20 years.

Of this, aircraft the size of the 747 and bigger will make up 18 per cent by value but only 7 per cent by number - equivalent to just over 1,100 aircraft. The biggest growth will be in single-aisle aircraft led by the burgeoning demand from the Chinese who alone are forecast to account for nearly a tenth of all deliveries between now and 2005.



Potential high-flyer: A model of the Boeing 747-500X undergoing testing in a low-speed wind tunnel

Boeing success shot in arm for UK aerospace firms

Michael Harrison

Britain's aerospace industry stands to win orders worth tens of millions of pounds following Boeing's success in being shortlisted for the Joint Strike Fighter project.

The huge programme to build a next generation fighter jet for the US Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy and the Royal Navy could eventually be worth \$150bn (£90bn). Boeing, which is in competition with Lockheed Martin for the programme, has won a \$660m con-

tract to develop its own version of the JSF and says that about 15 per cent of the work will be sub-contracted overseas, mainly in the UK. Among the British aerospace groups selected by Boeing so far are Rolls-Royce, GEC-Marconi and Dowty.

British Aerospace was teamed with McDonnell Douglas, which was surprisingly knocked out of the contest last month when the US government narrowed the shortlist to two. But BAe confidently expects to play an important role as a sub-contractor to one of the two re-

maining contenders. Mickey Michelich, Boeing's JST programme manager, refused to be drawn on whether it had approached BAe.

"We are in competition with Lockheed and when it is appropriate to make an announcement we will do so," he said. He added that the proportion of the work undertaken overseas would rise from the present figure. The US and UK requirement is for 3,000 aircraft. The JSF will replace a number of aircraft in service today including American F-18

and A6 fighters and the Royal Navy's Sea Harrier. The UK requirement is for 60 aircraft.

Boeing and Lockheed have each been awarded four-year development contracts which, in Boeing's case, will involve the building of two test aircraft - a short take-off and landing variant and a carrier-based variant. Production contracts are due to be awarded in 2001 with the aircraft entering service around 2008. It will have a 600-mile range and will be armed with 11,000 pounds of ordnance and a 20mm gun.

Moorfield pulls out of bid for Greycoat

Peter Rodgers

Greycoat, the £200m property company, said yesterday that it welcomed an announcement late on Saturday night that Moorfield Estates had dropped its plans for a bid.

Moorfield is a rival property company about a quarter the size of Greycoat by market capitalisation.

It approached Greycoat informally after UK Active Value, an investment company, launched a campaign to force Greycoat to dispose of a number of properties.

But UKAV came to an agreement with Greycoat last week which allowed the property company to see off rebel shareholders when it was a vote at an extraordinary meeting.

Michael Beckett, chairman of Greycoat, claimed £300,000 had been wasted organising meetings and paying advisers to fight allegations made by UKAV, which is led by Bryan Myerson. UKAV has 10.3 per cent of Greycoat.

With about 95 per cent of shareholders supporting Mr Beckett against proposals to sell £500m of property and in effect liquidate Greycoat, observers believe Moorfield was bound to bow out of its promised takeover bid.

A spokesman for Greycoat said that there had been no direct communication from Moorfield yesterday and that the company had learnt about the Moorfield decision to withdraw from other sources.

Moorfield said weeks ago it was putting together an all-paper proposal to merge with Greycoat, but appears not to have made concrete proposals.

Knight refuses to ease takeover rule for societies turned banks

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

Angela Knight, the Treasury minister, insisted yesterday that she would not back down on her plans to make building societies that become banks lose their protection against takeovers, if they make a bid of their own.

Mrs Knight was speaking ahead of a meeting of Alliance & Leicester members in London's Docklands tomorrow to approve the conversion and flotation next year.

The society has been the most vociferous critic of the proposal to make the five-year protection against bids conditional on not mounting takeovers for other financial institutions.

With Alliance, Woolwich and Northern Rock all complaining that their flotations are threatened by her new building societies legislation, she said "we

are talking about building societies as big as the Royal Bank of Scotland and larger than Guardian Royal Exchange".

Mrs Knight added that it would be "so discriminatory" to allow these huge financial institutions to make hostile bids against others without those other institutions being able to

protect themselves. They would be unable to do a counter-bid because of the protection."

She said she was not prepared to make changes in the core proposal of removing the five-year protection from any converted society that made a bid for another financial institution.

She believed there was an extensive range of activities societies could undertake without losing their protection, including the purchase of mortgage books and mortgage brokers and joint ventures with other companies, for example in the insurance industry.

She also denied a weekend report that her draft Building Societies Bill would be softened, to allow agreed mergers with other building societies to take place without loss of protection.

Mrs Knight's refusal to include even agreed mergers with other building societies in the

draft Bill is likely to disappoint Woolwich, which has been pressing her to say that protection can be maintained in these cases.

Mrs Knight said the problem with the proposal was that it had never been possible to define an agreed takeover in law.

Woolwich is thought to be less likely than Alliance & Leicester to mount large-scale takeovers after conversion, and it flatly denied yesterday it had been in talks with Royal Bank of Scotland, after a merger approach from the bank. A spokesman said preparations for the flotation were going ahead.

Mrs Knight also said she was seeking a way to allow a converted society to drop the takeover protection "if it really wanted to" while setting the threshold for voting at a level that would stop the society being "bounced" by a relatively small number of shareholders.

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Wickes poised for £50m cash call

Wickes, the DIY retailer, is likely to call on shareholders for extra cash this week. Some City analysts believe this could trigger a takeover bid for the company, whose former senior managers are under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office.

"We have not given an exact date for the rights issue but it is likely to be this week," a spokesman said yesterday. The group is expected to seek £50m in a move designed to plug a hole in its finances following the discovery of accounting irregularities.

Potential bidders include building materials giant RMC and Woolworths to Comet group Kingfisher. Analysts believe Wickes would command at least £200m.

The Serious Fraud Office launched an investigation late last month into the former senior executives of the group. Henry Sweetbaum, the

company's chairman and chief executive, resigned in June after disclosing that past profits were overstated.

In October it was announced that he had agreed to repay £720,000 of profit-related bonuses.

Former finance director Trevor Llewellyn, who left to join another company, agreed to pay back £485,000.

A report commissioned by the new management from Price Waterhouse and the law firm Linklaters & Paines found that profits had been overstated by a total of £51m over a number of years.

New chairman Michael von Brentano said in a shareholders' circular that Mr Sweetbaum must accept "ultimate responsibility" for the overstated profits, adding that there was no evidence that Mr Sweetbaum or other directors had been aware that supplier rebates had been prematurely booked as profits.

STOCK MARKETS						
FTSE 100						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
FTSE 100	3963.00	-95.0	-2.3	-0.73	4073.10	3632.30
FTSE 250	4348.10	-80.4	-1.8	-0.56	4568.50	4015.20
FTSE 350	1869.30	-44.9	-2.2	-2.02	2022.10	1818.80
FTSE SmallCap	2132.79	-28.8	-1.3	-2.24	2244.36	1954.06
FTSE All-Share	1942.22	-42.9	-2.2	-1.99	2022.10	1791.95
New York	6381.95	-139.8	-2.1	-0.57	6547.79	5032.94
Tokyo	20278.70	-743.7	-3.5	-2.66	22666.80	19724.70
Hong Kong	13102.73	-291.2	-2.2	-1.39	13930.95	10204.87
Frankfurt	2791.95	-53.6	-1.9	-1.90	2909.91	2283.36

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES						
UK interest rates						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
UK 1 month	8.06	6.88	7.70	7.52	7.77	7.68
UK 3 month	5.31	5.81	6.42	5.81	6.54	6.12
UK 6 month	0.34	0.58	2.47	0.34	-	-
UK 1 year	3.13	3.22	5.87	4.06	6.72	-
US interest rates						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
US 1 month	7.70	7.52	7.77	7.68	-	-
US 3 month	5.31	5.81	6.42	5.81	6.54	6.12
US 6 month	0.34	0.58	2.47	0.34	-	-
US 1 year	3.13	3.22	5.87	4.06	6.72	-
Money Market Rates						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
UK 1 month	8.06	6.88	7.70	7.52	7.77	7.68
UK 3 month	5.31	5.81	6.42	5.81	6.54	6.12
UK 6 month	0.34	0.58	2.47	0.34	-	-
UK 1 year	3.13	3.22	5.87	4.06	6.72	-
Bond Yields						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
UK 1 month	8.06	6.88	7.70	7.52	7.77	7.68
UK 3 month	5.31	5.81	6.42	5.81	6.54	6.12
UK 6 month	0.34	0.58	2.47	0.34	-	-
UK 1 year	3.13	3.22	5.87	4.06	6.72	-
MAIN PRICE CHANGES						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
UK 1 month	8.06	6.88	7.70	7.52	7.77	7.68
UK 3 month	5.31	5.81	6.42	5.81	6.54	6.12
UK 6 month	0.34	0.58	2.47	0.34	-	-
UK 1 year	3.13	3.22	5.87	4.06	6.72	-

CURRENCIES						
£/\$						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
\$ (London)	1.6417	-3.88c	1.5308	0.0091	-0.14	0.6533
\$ (NY)	n/a	n/a	1.5315	n/a	n/a	0.6529
DM (London)	2.5288	-0.54	2.2120	1.5404	-3.3	1.4451
¥ (London)	185.036	-8.18	155.111	Y (London)	112.710	-1.08
₹ (London)	92.0	-2.0	82.6	S (London)	97.7	+0.2
OTHER INDICATORS						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
Oil Brent \$	23.85	-0.10	15.54	RPI	153.8	+2.70c
Gold \$	368.85	-0.35	388.55	GDP	108.9	+2.30c
Gold £	225.16	+2.16	251.98	Base Rates	6.00pc	8.75

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GAVYN DAVIES

'Higher public borrowing by our European neighbours will increase the level of real interest rates throughout the single EU capital market, whether or not that market is bound together by fixed exchange rates. We cannot declare independence from these effects'

Son of ERM can stave off a shotgun wedding

If Britain eventually decides to stay out of the single currency, as even Ken Clarke is reported to believe that we will, it will be crucial for our future to avoid a situation in which we simply drift away from the EU as an organisation. There will be a powerful temptation for this to take place, but we can mitigate it by adopting a co-operative and integrationist approach to other items that are on the EU's economic agenda.

For example, there is our attitude to Stability Pact, a budgetary arrangement that will be probably be agreed in principle at the Dublin summit next weekend. The Germans have been asking for a "pact with teeth" but sadly, according to one government official this week, the outcome is likely to be a "pact with dentures". This means that the teeth in the mechanism will be removable by the user at will, i.e. that the enforcement mechanism needed to avoid excessive budget deficits inside the single currency will not be as tough as the Germans originally proposed. Even so, we should recognise that this "pact with dentures" is in the interests of all low debt economies like the UK, whether or not we join the single currency.

This particular penny has not yet dropped in the minds of the Euro-sceptics, who seem hostile to the pact as a generality, and not just as it would apply to the UK if we ever joined EMU. The point is that higher public borrowing by our European neighbours will in-

crease the level of real interest rates throughout the single EU capital market, whether or not that market is bound together by fixed exchange rates. We cannot declare independence from these effects.

Martin Brookes of Goldman Sachs has recently estimated that a successful Stability Pact will eventually reduce the level of European real interest rates by up to a full percentage point (admittedly over 25 years). The UK has a very strong vested interest in encouraging this to take place. Not only will it save the government about £4bn a year in interest payments, but it will also boost the level of capital investment, and the rate of sustainable GDP growth. Why anyone should imagine that it is in our interests to encourage the Italians to run huge budget deficits - which by implication is what the

Euro-sceptics are arguing - is most unclear. Another question which will be raised by the Dublin summit is whether the UK should consider rejoining the new ERM system. Obviously, this is not an imminent question, since the initial E-R-M are too horrible to mention in the presence of the Conservative Party. However, if we imagine the quite likely circumstances of a change of government, followed by a decision by a Blair administration to stand aside from the first round of EMU itself, things would suddenly look very different. A large element of the Labour cabinet would want the UK at minimum to adopt the status of a "pre-in", rather than a permanent "out", and a crucial litmus test of Labour's sincerity in this regard will be membership of ERM2.

Memories of our last experience with the ERM are so painful that any suggestion that we should rejoin is likely to be met with much derision. However, after the single currency has been launched, the risks of the UK simply drifting away from our closest neighbours are intense. Their main political attention will be on making EMU work, and they are likely to become resentful about the UK acting as a "free rider", taking advantage of the single market without accepting the obligations of membership of the single currency. If we intend to place ourselves nearer the heart of Europe, as a Labour government presumably will, we can hardly do this

while standing completely aside from monetary integration. By committing ourselves to ERM2, we would be reassuring other EU members that we had no intention of indulging in competitive devaluations against them, and indeed that we intend to enter the single currency when our economy is sufficiently integrated with theirs.

Some people would argue that if we are to rejoin ERM2, then we might as well go the whole hog and join the single currency itself. But this is quite wrong. The unique disadvantages of the single currency are first that we would be giving up the ability to vary domestic monetary policy in response to domestic economic shocks, and second that there would be no viable exit route for the UK in the extreme circumstance where things go very wrong. It seems doubtful the UK economy is yet sufficiently integrated with the core EU countries to justify taking these risks. Under ERM2, we would not have to.

The ERM2 proposal is that a central rate should be set for sterling against the euro, but that the intervention bands should be wide, probably of the order of 15 per cent either side of the central rate. Later, these bands could be narrowed as the process of integration proceeds. For illustration, the graph shows what this might have involved if sterling had joined such a mechanism early this year, though for familiarity we express the entry rate against the German mark, rather than against the (non-existent) euro. This does not change the substance of the argument.

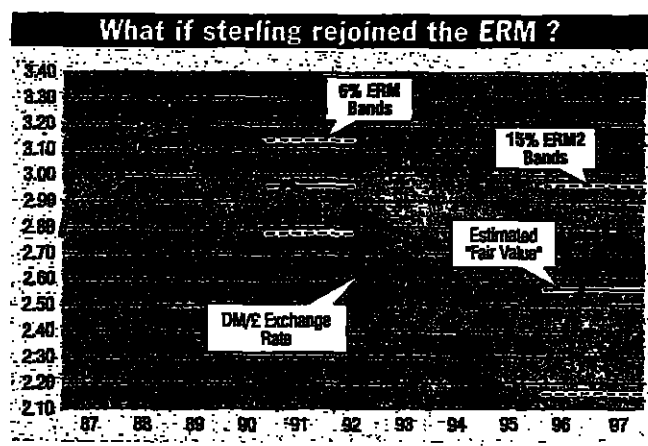
The central rate chosen on the graph is DM2.55. Recall that sterling originally

joined the ERM in November 1990 at a rate of DM2.93, but in retrospect most observers appear to believe that this rate was set too high, and that a rate of (say) DM2.80 would have been more appropriate.

If we update this DM2.80 rate from 1990 to the present, using relative price inflation in the two countries over the relevant period, we find that the central rate implied by this process is around DM2.55, which happens to be very close to today's actual rate. This is also confirmed by recent econometric analysis by Jim O'Neill and Stephen Hull of Goldman Sachs, which concludes that the equilibrium for the exchange rate on various estimates is between DM2.42 and 2.76.

If we rejoin the ERM at a central rate of DM2.55, then the limits of the bands would be DM2.95 and DM2.15. This encompasses virtually the whole of sterling's actual fluctuations since the ERM broke up in 1992, which implies that we would be left with all of the freedom we need to vary domestic monetary policy, and to allow sterling to oscillate up and down with interest rates.

But these temporary fluctuations would be very different from accepting a trend devaluation in sterling over long periods, which we would actively seek to avoid. This would be a perfectly good compromise until the UK felt that it was sufficiently integrated with other EU economies to justify full membership of EMU. In the choice between being semi-detached from the EU, and wholly detached from it, ERM2 and the Stability Pact have important roles to play, and it would be sad if false analogies with ERM1 were to prevent this from being properly considered.



Share shock likely to leave rates on hold

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Interest rates are unlikely to rise on either side of the Atlantic before the new year, following last week's sharp drop in share prices. But analysts predicted at the weekend that stock markets were likely to remain unsettled for the rest of this year.

Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer, is due to reply to MPs' questions on the Budget today, ahead of his monthly meeting on Wednesday with Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England.

Although the two men will have preliminary figures for November retail prices, expected to show another increase in the annual inflation rate, remarks the Governor made last week suggested he will not be pressing for the

next base rate increase so soon after the Budget.

The Bank has said that the strength of demand points to the need for higher interest rates at some stage, but Mr George played down financial market fears about the pressures.

Similarly, the US Federal Reserve is not expected to increase US interest rates at the 17 December meeting of its policy committee, even though the

US economy will probably be showing fresh signs of strength.

Fed chairman Alan Greenspan provoked Friday's share sell-off by referring to the stock market's "irrational exuberance", in a speech which most Fed-watchers interpreted as a deliberate bid to cool Wall Street's high temperature.

"Unless the economy roars into the new year, the Fed is unlikely to tighten policy. The jitters in the financial markets will

probably blow over fairly quickly," said Mark Cliffe of HSBC Markets.

Steven Bell, chief economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "The history of sell-offs like Friday's is that they get reversed. Even so, there will be further falls. When we get evidence of stronger growth and higher interest rates, that will happen."

Even without new economic evidence, Wall Street and the

US bond market are likely to be hit by year-end profit-taking by the giant mutual funds.

These are sitting on enormous paper profits, and Friday's dive will encourage them to lock in their results before the Christmas holiday.

In addition, most funds change their portfolio positions by taking big positions in the futures markets around new year. This too could lead to more upsets during the next few weeks, according to Goldman Sachs equity strategist Abby Cohen.

The US economy has so far combined steady growth with low inflation. Figures on Friday showed a smaller-than-expected rise in the number of new jobs last month but a sharp increase in hourly earnings. This week's consumer price figures are likely to show inflation

picking up above 3 per cent.

Economists expect figures on Thursday to show the UK's annual headline rate of inflation remaining above 3 per cent.

A survey published this morning by the Engineering Employers' Federation shows that pay settlements in the industry have remained steady at an average of 3 per cent.

David Yeandle, head of employment affairs, welcomed this prudence, saying: "We are encouraged to see that pay settlements in the industry are stable."

On the other hand, the signs of the consumer spree continue to build up. A survey by property consultants Healey & Baker, also released this morning, estimates that consumers will spend £23.5bn on Christmas this year, a £700m increase over last year.



Spending escalates: Consumers are expected to part with £23.5bn this Christmas, up nearly £1bn on last year

IN BRIEF

• Creditors of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International are to receive a 24.5p in the pound payout tomorrow from the liquidators Deloitte and Touche and a second dividend of at least 10p in the pound more is promised within 16 months. BCCI collapsed in 1991 with debts of £10bn and the payout has been delayed by lengthy court arguments.

• The head of a water firm facing a takeover bid from two French groups yesterday claimed services to 530,000 customers would be hit if the move was successful. An MMC inquiry into the joint bid for Mid Kent Holdings is due to be completed. President of the Board of Trade Ian Lang will consider the Commission's findings before giving a ruling next month on whether the takeover could go ahead. The two companies, General Utilities and Saur, have not yet put a formal takeover offer on the table.

• US officials were optimistic yesterday about prospects for a free-trade pact on information technology at the first annual meeting of the World Trade Organisation. At negotiations between the US, Japan and the EU, on the eve of the five-day WTO meeting in Singapore, officials discussed the removal of remaining trade barriers in computer and telecommunications equipment by 2000.

• British Gas was reported at the weekend to be ready to barter control of its Morecambe Bay gas field to ease the burden of the company's take-or-pay contracts with the gas production industry.

• RAT is looking at ways to strengthen its financial services empire, including a merger or partnership with a bank, building society or insurance company. The group has ruled out a demerger of its insurance business.

• Reuters said in response to a report yesterday that it had shelved its plan for a special dividend that it was continuing to look at the options.

• Peter Goldie, former managing director of the collapsed British & Commonwealth, is understood to have been disqualified as a director for five years at a hearing in the High Court on Friday.

Firms all at sea overseas

The take-up and success of overseas postings would improve if companies gave more help to the partners of staff they want to send to work abroad, writes Diane Coyle.

Although nearly three-quarters of companies recognise that working partners have become a more important barrier to their employees taking up international assignments, only two-fifths have a policy to help these wives or husbands.

A survey published today by the Confederation of British Industry and Organisation Resources Counsellors advises companies to become more sensitive to employees' family needs. John Crichton, the CBI's director of human resources, said: "Selecting the staff to send overseas would be improved if firms treated the partners as part of the team."

Of the 38 per cent of survey respondents with a formal policy, the most common help given to partners was language training and help with work permits and job searches.

Millennium technology gives banks a headache

Jim Treanor
Banking Correspondent

The race to install new technology to adapt to Crest, EMU and the start of the next millennium is causing concern for the City's investment banks which plan to analyse the effect the rapid pace of change is having on resources.

The problem is not with the cost of these changes - which is running into hundreds of millions of pounds - but with the number of people and the amount of time available to make the changes.

Kit Farrow, director of the London Investment Bankers Association (Liba), said: "It's a question of whether we're attempting to achieve more than collectively City institutions can cope with."

Crest, the new electronic share system, is continually dogged with problems and the introduction of new shares to the system has been delayed.

Problems with Crest have had a knock-on effect on the Bank of England's plans to upgrade the Central Gilts Office electronic settlements system which will use the same software as the Crest system.

This means that plans to trade the interest payments on gilts separately from the principal - known as "strippable" government bonds - have been pushed back further into 1997.

On top of these immediate changes, City banks are preparing their computer systems for the introduction of the euro, the single European currency, in 1999. Regardless of whether Britain takes part in the uni-

fication, banks must be ready to trade the currency.

They must also deal with the problem facing companies world-wide - the fact that computer systems were not designed to cope with dates after 1999. When 2000 begins, many firms will find that their computers believe it is 1900 again as they only read the last two digits of dates.

"We're turning our attention increasingly to the load on systems changes," Mr Farrow said. Liba was looking at this issue more vigorously than in the past and was talking to its members about the problems technological changes could be posing.

"We're very anxious not to jump to conclusions," said Mr Farrow. "But we may find that there are real questions to try to explore with members."

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science

Putting psychics to the test

An arch-sceptic is offering \$1m in a challenge to belief in the paranormal, writes Wendy Grossman

You could become a millionaire if you have psychic powers. A fortnight ago, James Randi, the magician and noted debunker of paranormal claims, announced that he has \$1,073,000 waiting as a challenge prize for anyone who demonstrates psychic powers under controlled conditions.

"Just ask for an application form: send a letter plus a stamped, self-addressed envelope to this address (international applicants can forget the stamp) and fill it out, have it notarised, make the claim, demonstrate it, and walk away with more than one million dollars! It's that simple," he said on his Internet mailing list recently. "Again I ask, why isn't the lobby of the James Randi Educational Foundation jammed with psychics? Perhaps they were waiting for the prize to be worthwhile? Well, now it is."

If things go well, you might pick up another \$1m from Uri Geller, who has promised to pay that to anyone who can bend the spoon in his transparent safe, via a link across the World Wide Web. (Though you will have to do it again in front of a representative from his insurance company.)

But generally, these are hard times for those who approach all paranormal claims sceptically. (They are often known as skeptics – the "k" harks back to the American origins of their movement.) At June's World Congress to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), speakers contended that anti-science is growing everywhere, even within academia.

Yet comparing polls since 1989 suggests little change in the public's belief in topics such as pre-cognition, lucky charms, and exchanging messages with the dead. If anything, they're slightly down. A sample: in 1989 42 per cent of those polled said they believed in life after death, while 42 per cent said they didn't; by 1995 those numbers were 39 and 44 per cent respectively. The only exception is belief in flying saucers, which showed a small rise in belief, from 21 per cent in 1989 to 24 per cent in 1995.

But Randi, who has been investigating paranormal claims for more than 50 years, and was a founding fellow of CSICOP, questions the polls' accuracy. He cites other indicators: in 1965 Books in



James Randi, crusader against supernatural trickery, despairs at the growth of irrationalism: 'Scientifically we're in a dark age ... thinking is out, acceptance is in'

Print listed 131 books promoting paranormal claims; in 1996, it was 2,860. And look at homeopathic remedies (untested in double-blind trials) and the prevalence of programmes such as *The X-Files*, which some think is documentary.

"If you had asked me six years ago, I would have been encouraged. But immediately after that there started a rapid slide downhill, and it's just catastrophic today. Scientifically, we're in a dark age," he says. The sceptics' attitude "is just so unpopular – to be logical, informed, to be rational. Thinking is out, acceptance is in."

Earlier this year he set up The James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF), intended to conduct and finance research into paranormal claims, run classes and seminars, award scholarships, and maintain a library of relevant research material, including a pres-

ence on the World Wide Web. JREF also awards the annual Pigasus trophy ("trophies will be sent via psychokinesis"). And now there's that \$1m awaiting a psychic willing to be tested.

The prize won't be easily won. In 1986 Randi exposed the faith healing televangelist Peter Popoff by playing the information being fed into Popoff's ear by his wife backstage to nationwide television audiences. (Popoff had claimed that the information came from God.) Randi has tested dowsers in Australia, table-tippers in Italy, and, most recently, therapeutic touch practitioners in Colorado.

But Randi is best known for challenging Uri Geller, the Israeli who since the Seventies has drawn attention to his claims that he is able to use the power of his mind to bend spoons, start stopped watches, read minds, and even

speak to aliens. Randi does a very persuasive job of imitating parts of Geller's act using the tricks of the stage magician's trade.

His experience with Geller demonstrates what a tricky business both testing psychic claims and reporting the results can be. In 1991, Geller sued CSICOP and Randi jointly over comments that Randi – then a member of CSICOP's executive council – made in an interview with the *International Herald Tribune*. Randi suggested that Geller had "tricked even reputable scientists" with techniques that "are the kind that used to be on the back of cereal boxes when I was a kid. Apparently scientists don't eat cornflakes any more."

The case against CSICOP was dismissed in 1993, with Geller ordered to pay almost \$150,000 in costs – though CSICOP later settled for \$70,000. Randi and Geller

settled separately in December 1994, when Geller's case was effectively dismissed, but without damages. Randi reckoned he was about \$240,000 out of pocket. Geller also sued Randi in a number of other countries, winning amounts under \$5,000.

Why does it matter to Randi or other sceptics whether Geller has the abilities he claims? The sceptics reply that if a human being really can bend metal using only his mind, it constitutes a serious challenge to humanity's store of accumulated scientific knowledge, painstakingly built up by careful research over the centuries. If you can't investigate such claims to open the way for further testing and debate and report the results, it is a loss to science and that public store of knowledge.

What can be done? The state of Colorado has passed a law to

tackle a similar problem, after environmentalists complained of legal harassment from companies which they accused of pollution. The Colorado law requires any suit in which government decisions are at stake (for example, permission to build a nuclear power plant) to pass a test to show that it's not frivolous.

Perhaps something of the kind is needed to protect scientific inquiry in the field of paranormal research. Meanwhile, while Randi would say that \$1m has never been safer, he himself is still at risk. And science is the loser.

The *Skeptic* magazine can be reached at PO Box 275, Manchester M60 2TH, skeptic@cs.man.ac.uk, or <http://www.cs.man.ac.uk/skeptic/>. The James Randi Educational Foundation is at <http://www.randi.org/>. CSICOP is at <http://www.csicop.org>.

technoquest

Questions and answers provided by Science Line's Dial-a-Scientist on 0345 600444

Q Why are our elbows better than our hands when testing the temperature of babies' bath water?

A Although there are more nerve endings in the hands and feet, the skin in these regions is usually quite thick and shields our skin temperature receptors from any temperature we are trying to measure. Using a region of our body which has thinner skin is more effective. It also leaves your hands free to hold the baby.

Q How and why do frogs sing? Is it because they're territorial?

A Frogs have a larynx and vocal chords like other vertebrates, so sound production is essentially the same as in humans, birds and mammals. However, different species show a range of singing ability, from virtually silent to very loud calls. They probably sing for several reasons – advertising for a mate, intimidating predators or even to get other males to release them from a mating embrace. Generally, males call and females stay silent – or quietly call back to let the male know they're there. Some frogs are territorial only in the breeding season, while others may guard an area all year round.

Q How does a Venus fly trap digest a fly?

A When a fly enters the Venus fly trap, it knocks a trigger hair that sets the trap. It's not until the fly moves again and triggers another hair that the trap is sprung and the plant closes its "jaws". Once the jaws are closed, the plant lets out digestive juices which dissolve the fly. The juices and dissolved fly are absorbed by the plant. This is similar to how food is digested in our stomachs.

Q How does water move around in a tree?

A Water molecules are very good at sticking together – where one goes, the rest will follow. This is called surface tension. When you pull on one molecule, the rest tend to move too. Water is sucked out of the roots by evaporation from its leaves; this pulls water up from the roots.

Q Why do male spiders let themselves be eaten by females after mating?

A Only a few species of spider go through this bizarre ritual. The males often try to escape, but as females are many times larger, this is not easy. The males drive to pass on their genes to the next generation is greater than their desire to live long but ultimately mortal lives. Sacrificing themselves to the female also provides her with extra nutrition, improving her chances of fathering his offspring.

theoretically ...

Faces aren't enough to recognise a person, according to researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who report in *Nature*. Countering the long-standing thinking that we remember a face by storing data about relative positions of eyes, nose and mouth, they say that you also need to know about shape and position of their head. They demonstrated the effect using digitally manipulated pictures of Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Where they found people who could remember what Mr Gore looks like isn't recorded.

Why don't models of ozone depletion in the Arctic match reality? Because, say a team in Paris in the latest *Nature*, the computer models can't reproduce the tiny variations in spatial distribution of the ozone-eating chemicals. These could account for big discrepancies between forecast and observed ozone depletion around the North Pole, they say. While models work well with the Antarctic, the polar air circulation is less

uniform in our hemisphere. To back up their suggestion, the researchers used an ultra high-resolution model to show that ozone depletion really is sensitive to small-scale differences. For the winter of 1994-95, the effect is large enough to account for the Arctic ozone depletion being 40 per cent greater than models predicted.

The River Nile's great bend, where it zigzags from its northerly path to head southwest for almost 200 miles before heading north again, is probably due to tectonic forces. A report in *Science* based on radar-sensing data from the Nasa space shuttle suggests that the southwesterly movement is comparatively recent, caused by geological uplift from faults in younger rock beneath it. The northwards flow dates from Precambrian strata. So it's not civil engineering to make the cruises longer.

Family-linked cases of Alzheimer's disease tend to occur at an earlier age than the "spontaneous" forms. The role of the genetic link – a gene known as P52 – is

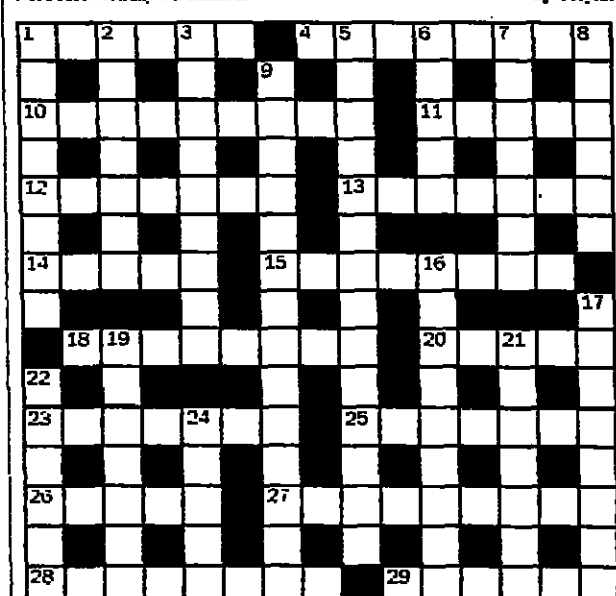
becoming clearer. New US research has found that P52 mutation produces a molecule which makes neurons more likely to commit "cell suicide" (apoptosis). Perhaps, say the team at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, the molecule makes neurons more sensitive to the "normal insults" of ageing, adding to the "toxic burden" in the patients' brains.

Massively fat, diabetic and infertile: it's no fun being a mouse deficient in leptin. That's the hormone encoded by the "Ob" (for obese) gene which helps you lose weight by suppressing appetite and stimulating your metabolism. But as dieters will have suspected, leptin isn't the only player in the weight charades. A neuropeptide called NPY, known to regulate energy balance, reaches high levels in leptin-deficient mice. But mice that don't produce leptin or NPY are less obese than their leptin-deficient mates and suffer less from diabetes or sterility. Gene therapy for weight loss? The day might not be far off. It's just that you would have to mediate a lot of genes.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

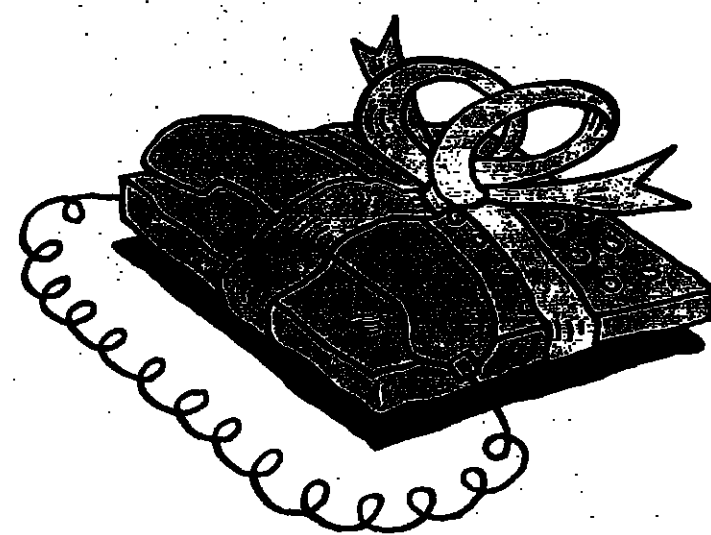
No. 3165, Monday 9 December

By Corynys



- ACROSS**
- 1 A term's leaving him shattered? (6)
 - 4 Scholarly account, round about a dime out (8)
 - 10 Make declaration about old Arab's private compartment (9)
 - 11 In poetry, always, that is weird (5)
 - 12 West's wrong sort of conductor (7)
 - 13 A French party with gin flowing leads to downfall (7)
 - 14 Colour which is constant in the ocean (5)
 - 15 On tibia being broken one's limited from the beginning (2,6)
 - 18 Take back tainted money in ritual (8)
 - 20 Father collects waste product to get title (5)
 - 23 Vegetable, very black one, in prison (7)
 - 25 Catalogue of best records set to be wiped out? (3,4)

- DOWN**
- 1 Male cooked his potato mix (8)
 - 2 Take nourishment, eating fish for a change (5,2)
 - 3 Yet Tuesday's high tea produces result (9)
 - 5 Monopoly feature in a US fund (9,5)
 - 6 Fear being late, having to cross river (5)
 - 7 Skirt getting into short skirt deserves a drink (7)
 - 8 Breaking leg cry for providers of scenery? (6)
 - 9 State game is Murphy's ruination (8,6)
 - 16 Job description selfishly makes one irritable? (9)
 - 17 Musical composition of fellow worker on continent (8)
 - 19 Stop and proceed after change to amber (7)
 - 21 Make poor provision about June's bit of winter sport (3,4)
 - 22 Experts regularly doubling up means of entry (6)
 - 24 A Russian river detected by ear (5)



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